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HER FOOT WAS ALREADY ON THE STEPS OF THE CAR, WHEN A VOICE SAID, REPROACHFULLY:
"WILL YOU NOT SAY 'GOOD-BY' TO ME ALSO?"

THE COUNTRY COUSIN;

Or, ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

BY ROSE KENNEDY.

CHAPTER I.
THE GOOD-BY.

"Are you sure you have forgotten nothing, Elizabeth?"

"All is ready, Auntie, even to my gloves, and it lacks an hour yet to the time at which the train passes."

"Well, Elizabeth, you have been a good girl, and you have my blessing, and my best wishes for your success among your new acquaintance. May the wicked influence of a vile and corrupt city never do away with the teachings of your now sainted mother. New York is a den of wickedness. You will be a lamb among lions, and I wonder that you have courage to set your

foot in it. But, since you will go, may you be 'wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.'"

"Why, auntie, you talk more as if I were going unprotected to seek my fortune there, than as if I were to be in the bosom of a family like that of my uncle Philip. What harm can befall me there? I expect to be so wrapped away from common humanity among my aristocratic relatives that I shall actually pine for 'breezes from Heaven to visit my cheek too roughly.' I shall miss the freedom of my native hills, but, aside from that, I go with high hopes, aunt Faithful."

"That is the way of youth; it goes dancing and laughing, even among pitfalls. The dangers which I refer to, niece, are spiritual dangers. I know your aunt Vanderlyn of old, and her husband, and what her family must be with such parents—worldliness, and selfishness, and pomp, and vainglory, from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their feet. It is *their* influence over your heart and mind that I fear."

"Don't you think you judge too harshly, aunt? Remember, they have been differently educated, and move in a different world from us. They are compelled to pay attention to outside show, yet their hearts may be excellent. I am sure it was kind of them to offer me a home for such a merely nominal consideration. And only last week I saw uncle Philip's name heading a contribution for some charitable purpose with a liberal sum. Oh, aunt Faithful, if you knew the motives which most influence me in choosing the city for a residence, you would wish me God speed and pray for my success. I have such dreams—such happy expectations!"

The face of the speaker was lit with a glow of almost angelic beauty. Her hopes must have been pure, or they could not have filled those dark-blue eyes with such soul-lit radiance. Always lovely, at that moment Elizabeth Ward was unusually so. Excitement heightened the color upon her cheek, and sent rippling smiles basking in sunshine about her mouth. She stood upon the porch, with her trunks, carpet-bags and shawls around her. Her figure, neither *petite* nor yet queenly, moved by the very spirit of grace and rounded in every outline, gave a charm of its own to her simple traveling-dress. Her bonnet was still in her hand, and her brown hair fluttered in the breeze, shining as if its curls had been powdered with gold. It was an autumn day, warm and brilliant; the vines which nestled around the top of the porch dropped crimson leaves at her feet; the rose-bushes had exchanged their delicate bloom for the scarlet berries of October.

Aunt Faithful had drawn her chair to the porch door, where she could see the first puff

of the iron horse as he darted out of his mountain hollow, breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils as he sped forward to the little depot not very far from this village cottage. Her knitting was in her hand, as usual, and her spectacles on her nose, but the needles quivered and made false stitches, and the glasses were dimmed so that she could not see with her usual clearness as she looked toward the young girl standing there in her traveling costume.

"It's time John took these trunks away, if you don't want to be left. Oh, here he comes! Well—" after a pause, during which the baggage was conveyed away—"do you propose to tell me what your expectations are, Elizabeth?"

A modest blush flitted over that youthful brow.

"I can not tell you my plans at length, because they are not formed, *definitely*."

"Some time I will write to you and get your advice. You know that the property which was left me has been so arranged as to leave me a clear income of a thousand dollars a year, with nothing for me to do but to draw it quarterly. This is much more than I need, or should spend upon myself. My personal expenses here in this village have been only about a hundred dollars a year; yet I have dressed well, and I know that twice that sum will dress me just as nicely as I desire or think proper. I have made a resolution to limit myself to that sum. One hundred more will cover incidental expenses. My uncle at first refused to take any thing for my board, but, finally, at my urgent solicitation, said I might pay over to Blanche just two hundred a year, to keep her in *bijouterie* and pins, telling me, laughingly, that his daughter was often 'reduced to a mere skeleton' for the want of a new dress to wear over it. Yet he allows her six hundred *just for clothing*, besides the splendid presents she has. I expect she will laugh at my simplicity, but I do not intend to be influenced in what I have made a matter of principle."

"Now, I shall have half my income to devote to the benefit of others. It is true that, living in this country place, I might manage to dispose of it to the poor around us, and by sending it to charitable institutions. But in the city one sees constantly such pressing wants, and can judge, by personal observation, where the means will produce the best effect. I do not intend to give myself up to society entirely; no, nor even to my beloved books, nor to the enchantments of music and the fine arts, although I have a love for all of these; but I wish to *work*—to do something to accomplish some good. I mean to make my half a thousand dollars a year confer benefits upon

others, and, through them, upon myself. I yearn to be actively charitable. With youth, health, leisure, and some money to spare, I ought to accomplish a little—a very little—of the good work which the Master has left his followers to do.”

Tears trembled upon her eyelashes as she ceased speaking.

“Well, child, I believe in your intentions, and shall not cease to pray that they may be fulfilled. The Bible says, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ and I can but feel that you are leading yourself into temptation. It grieves me to let you go. What’s that?”

“The whistle, auntie, and I must go.”

The bonnet was tied on with quivering fingers, and a face all drenched with tears, like a rose with dew, lay for a moment upon the bosom of aunt Faithful, who had dropped stocking and spectacles, and sprung to her feet.

“Good-by, my dear, dear auntie,” was half lost in sobs.

“Fare thee well, child, and remember, if ever you grow tired of the world, and long for rest, while this heart still beats there is a shelter for you here.”

Those trembling tones quite broke down the young girl’s courage, and for a moment she wept unrestrainedly, then, with an effort, she recovered herself, gave aunt Faithful one more embrace, and ran down the lane to the street.

Several of her young friends were waiting at the depot to say farewell. She had just time to give a hand to each, when the train came thundering in, and paused for a moment by the platform.

Her foot was already on the steps of the car, when a voice said, reproachfully:

“Will you not say ‘good-by’ to me also?”

She turned and beheld the young minister of the village. There was something in his eyes which thrilled her as they never had before, but she had no time to reflect upon their language, nor to mark the tremor of the voice.

“I thought you had forgotten your parishoner, but here is something which I had prepared as a little farewell gift to my good minister;” and she slipped a bit of folded paper in his hand. The bell rung, she stepped inside, and the cars were whirling away.

When she handed Mr. Hastings the paper, a sprig of myrtle, which she had plucked as she ran down the lane, dropped upon the platform. He gathered this up, when all the others had turned away, and, hurrying down the village street to his home, he did not unclothe the note which he held until he was in the seclusion of his own apartment. When he did unfold it, two fifty-dollar checks were disclosed, and a few words, saying, “One is to purchase books

for my pastor—the other to be given as he sees fit, in charity.”

“The blessed child!” murmured the minister.

In the meantime our young adventurer, nestled in a corner of the seat, was looking out her open window, enjoying the exhilaration of the swift motion, the bright air and pleasant scenery. For a time she forgot her sorrow at leaving home, and her anticipations of the future; she forgot that she had neither father or mother, sister or brother, and that she must rely almost entirely upon herself for happiness, and direct, almost unaided, her own footsteps. Elizabeth’s was no ordinary character. If her exceedingly sweet and noble countenance arrested the attention of the careless beholder, not less did the purity of her soul charm those who were able to appreciate it, and her sterling qualities of mind excited admiration. That she was very pretty and rich—that is, rich for a retired country town—everybody in Fitchburg knew; but the reasons which impelled to some more enlarged space of life, nobody, not even her aunt or the minister, fully understood. Her father, the leading lawyer of Fitchburg, and finally Presiding Judge of the District, died when she was in her sixteenth year. He had been a gentleman of polished education and some genius, and had delighted in unfolding to the mind of his only child knowledge which, in the ordinary course of schooling, she never would have acquired. There were system and symmetry to her acquirements. Upon the tough and firm young “tree of knowledge,” which thrived and grew under his skillful cultivation, expanded the flowers of feminine embellishment necessary to its full beauty. Music, which was the mother’s sweetest gift—saving, ever, her fine spiritual perceptions and most womanly heart—was one of Elizabeth’s accomplishments. She had never been sent to “boarding-school.” All that she knew of the world, outside of her books and her village home, she had learned during the holiday excursions which Judge Ward was in the habit of taking each summer with his wife and child, and during one or two brief visits to her city relatives, several years before the commencement of this record. A year had not passed from the death of her father, before her mother went to her long resting-place. Such desolation as this, to a young and sensitive heart, was desolation indeed; and, for a time, aunt Faithful, in whose home the orphan sought refuge, feared that the golden bowl would be broken at the fountain of grief.

Hope is strong in the young and healthful. The rolling months brought a renewal of interest in life; but a thoughtfulness was given to Elizabeth’s character, which otherwise might never have been.

So here, a little past her eighteenth birthday, she was about to try the world for herself. As her eyes wearied of the flitting landscape, she drew her veil over her face, and gave herself up to anticipations of her reception at her uncle Vanderlyn's. She had not seen Blanche for four years, who then was, of course, but a school-girl, with her character as undeveloped as her form and features. She then had promised to be brilliant-looking, though at that time dark and sallow, and a little overgrown. Already had she begun to chatter about "the beaux," and had all the lore of a fashionable boarding-school in her quick brain. Elizabeth had liked her, for Blanche knew well how to please, and how to conceal knowledge that would be offensive.

The traveler looked forward to finding a sister in her city-bred cousin. As for her aunt Alice, she never expected her to be any thing more than a pleasant aunt to her, for she had contrasted her with her own mother years ago, and found her sadly deficient in some qualities. Mrs. Vanderlyn was emphatically a "woman of the world." Uncle Philip would be a courteous, affable, generous uncle, who would kiss her occasionally, when he felt merry after dinner, and let her have her own way. There was another member of the family whom she had not yet seen—at least, not since she was a little child—and that was Philip Vanderlyn, junior, her young gentleman cousin, who had been in Paris for the last five years studying medicine and—French society.

She had understood from Blanche's last letter that they expected him home some time during the winter; but Elizabeth had as yet given him only a passing thought, as to whether she would like him, and if he would not be very critical in his judgments upon her.

Finally, by a sudden sweep, round came the thoughts of the young girl to the minister, and his earnest look which had for a moment surprised her. Her heart beat quicker. She was not vain, and had never perceived in the frequent conversations and visits of her pastor, any thing more than that they were congenial, talking poetry, and lending each other books, out of love for the books and poetry. But his eyes, at parting, had spoken a language which she tried in vain to misunderstand. She did not know whether to be glad or sorry, nor what would come yet of it. She certainly had been deeply interested in his society, admired his genius, and esteemed his pure and elevated mind. Many of the schemes of philanthropy which were quickening in her heart, had sprung from germs which his teachings had scattered. Now, what more? She could not answer.

Throwing back her veil with a deep breath, as if to shake off too heavy thoughts, the

young traveler looked around, and found that night had come. She began to be conscious of hunger, too, and was not sorry the next time the train stopped, to hear the conductor cry: "Half an hour for supper."

Having telegraphed to her uncle, as well as written, that she would arrive that evening, she gave herself no uneasiness at the want of a protector; but having a whole seat to herself, after tea, she curled up in it snugly, and took quite a refreshing sleep.

With a prolonged scream that sent the passengers to gathering together stray articles of wearing apparel, overcoats and carpet-bags, a ringing of bells and glimmer of lights, the train slackened and paused. Elizabeth's heart gave a bound, and then sunk low for a moment. She had arrived at the threshold of her new life.

She found her uncle's carriage awaiting her. It was eleven o'clock when she arrived at his house. Her aunt came into the hall to meet her. The parlors were illuminated, and there was company—so the traveler passed on to her room. Blanche ran up to kiss and welcome her, and then excused herself until her company should depart.

A waiting-maid brought her a cup of tea, and opened the trunk and traveling-bag, whose contents she required. She was already in her night-dress, and brushing out her hair before retiring, when Blanche bounded into the room, asked the privilege of sharing her bed, and was soon nestled by her side, and kept her awake and curious two hours with a whirlwind of small talk.

CHAPTER II.

SMALL TALK.

"It was richly worth a poet's while,
To trudge for many a weary mile
To meet the light of her careless smile,
Or for any who wished to see the style
Of the latest promenade dresses.
She seemed a kind of wonderful thing,
Angelic, enchanting, and glittering,
With a step like the wave of a Peri's wing,
And a hat three weeks from Paris."—SAXE.

BLANCHE was bent upon astonishing her country cousin. It was after a late breakfast the day following Elizabeth's arrival. The girls had gone to their room, or rooms—for their private apartments consisted of a *suite*, including one large chamber, half parlor, half boudoir, and two pleasant sleeping-rooms opening off, with closets and bath. Luxurious carpets and lounges, mirrors large enough to reflect the full effect of a toilet, and every little article of beauty and cultivated necessity, fairly crowded the space. French paintings of women, beautiful in dress and person, little gems of that school of art, hung upon the walls, betraying the taste of their possessor.

Blanche had more than fulfilled her early

promise. She was a superb-looking girl, exquisite in dress, queenly in carriage, with black hair, brilliant dark eyes, and a Juno-like form. Elizabeth loved the tasteful and the beautiful, and was too free from envy to think with anything but affectionate regard of the graces which her city cousin was playing off to dazzle her.

"Just see this closet, how full it is of dresses! And not one of them are summer-dresses. Those that I wore at Newport are in these three trunks packed away. They are full of lovely robes. I have five *moire-antiques*. Look at this crimson one—it is very becoming to my complexion. I look like a princess in it."

"I believe you," said Elizabeth, quietly.

"I have thirty-seven petticoats," continued Blanche.

"Indeed?"

"And fifteen different shawls!"

"So many?"

"On my last birthday—I was nineteen, you know—papa gave me a set of pearls worth a thousand dollars. Mamma gave me this camel's-hair shawl. I had several costly presents besides, from friends and relatives. I have so many presents, Lizzie dear, do you?"

"You must remember I have never enjoyed the pleasure of being a belle, cousin Blanche; still, I have received some presents. My aunt Faithful gave me this purse, which she crotcheted herself, and I prize it as highly as you do your camel's-hair."

"Fie! what funny taste! How nice it must be to have a fortune, all of your own, with liberty to spend it just as you choose. If I were you, I would never content myself upon the interest. I should encroach upon the principal, and trust to catching a rich husband to restore it."

"Why, Blanche!"

"You look frightened, you little puss. Do you think that girls must wait to be caught, and never bait the hook themselves, eh? It's a great mistake, my pretty country maiden. However, you need not think that I am fishing for any mortal being. I have too many offers now. I have had thirteen already. How many have you had, Lizzie?"

"Not one."

"Impossible! and so rich and so pretty, for I must say, you are very pretty—though of a different order of beauty from mine. Not so striking. I wish I had your complexion; your neck is as velvety and fair as a lily-leaf. Do you powder? No! I always do. I do not think a lady's toilet is complete without powder. I am so glad you are going to be with me this winter! We are going to be very gay, and it will be so nice to have some one to help me entertain company. I have already de-

cided upon what I am going to order for New Year's day, to receive calls in—a rose-colored flounced robe, with velvet. Mercy! these are not all the dresses you possess, I hope?" looking into the closet where Nannette had been unfolding and hanging up the contents of Miss Ward's trunks.

"I have always had as many as I needed," laughed Elizabeth.

"Well! you will want *twenty* times as many now. I hope you have brought *plenty* of money; we shall have *such* excitement in shopping for you! I love to shop the best of anything in the world—almost! You must let me select for you; my friends say my taste is perfect."

Elizabeth thought it altogether probable that she should exercise her own judgment and taste, as she was aware that she had considerable of both; but she did not say so. She sought to drop the dress question, by inquiring:

"Do you really expect your brother Philip home this winter?"

"Yes, indeed, in about a month. I shall be so glad to see him, for he has been gone five years. I *hope* he will bring me some beautiful things. They say he is a great fop, and very fond of society. So we three will make the house merry."

"I shall be but a 'looker-on in Vienna,' a kind of an 'aside,' like a painting on the wall. I am not accustomed to much gayety; and if you will let me keep my room and read my books in peace, I shall be happy."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, cousin Lizzie. You were not 'born to waste your sweetness on the desert air.' Books, indeed! I got through with them when I was at school, except the new novels, and a little of Longfellow's poetry, or Alexander Smith's. Tennyson is sweet, don't you think so?"

Elizabeth felt very much disappointed. She had hoped for congeniality of tastes in her beautiful cousin; but if the morning's conversation was a specimen of what was to be, she saw little was to be expected. Still, she might display more mind as they grew better acquainted. That she had a fine intellect, she did not doubt. It had been misdirected from childhood, and was smothered under a mountain of gauze, and silk, and vanity, and frippery.

"Do you pay much attention to your music now, Blanche?"

"Oh yes, I have to keep that up. It is one of my 'cards.' I play all of Wallace's music, and the fashionable operas. My voice is just suited to opera music. I have been told by some of my friends that I sing the *Casta Diva* almost equal to Madame La Grange. But come, lunch is ready." With their arms about

each other's waists, they descended to the dining-room. Mr. Vanderlyn was never home until dinner; so there was no ceremony at lunch. Elizabeth had not seen her aunt at breakfast; she had sent down word that she was not well, and upon her niece expressing anxiety concerning her, Blanche said, laughingly:

"Do not be uneasy at mamma's complaints; she *always* has some ailment; but it is astonishing how infallibly she revives as the hour for going out and receiving company arrives. She has drank of the fountain of perpetual youth; she is the greatest rival I have, despite her ill-health."

This flippant tone, while speaking of her mother, pained Lizzie, who only thought and spoke of her own mother with reverence and affection the most beautiful. But, for this, be it remarked, Blanche was not so much to blame as her parent, who had never given her that reason to reverence her. She was an indulgent mother, but one whose folly, affectation and vanity were quite apparent to the child brought up after her own fashion.

When they entered the dining-room, Mrs. Vanderlyn was at the table, magnificently dressed, with bonnet and cloak on, and gloves lying by her side. She inquired with great kindness after her niece's health and comfort, who assured her that she felt entirely rested by her two hours of extra sleep before breakfast. "You know we breakfast earlier in the country, aunt. Are you feeling any better than you were in the morning?"

"I hardly know whether I am or not, my dear. I hope that a cup of strong tea will impart some strength to my nerves. I still have a bad headache, but the fresh air will revive me. I must take advantage of the few bright days which we will have now, to go out as much as possible. I am going to make some calls, and shall not return until dinner. You will not be lonely, will you? Blanche will take care of you. But perhaps you would have liked the carriage to-day for a drive? If so, I will defer—"

"Oh, no, dear aunt, do not think of it."

"No indeed, thank you, mamma. It is pleasant enough for a promenade to-day, and we shall prefer to walk," added Blanche. "We, too, are going out, as soon as we can get dressed."

"I was thinking you made rather a fine-looking pair as you came in at the door, linked like a couple of Graces. You have grown up as fair and stately as one of Juno's lilies, Elizabeth. Blanche, with her darker and more brilliant charms, will be a splendid foil for you. You will both gain by the contrast."

"I should never think of it," was the modest reply.

Dress and personal attractions seemed the

principal subjects of conversation, and the new-comer did not know how to enter into it with much spirit.

"Well, young ladies, you must hasten your repast if you wish to enjoy the sunshine. It grows cool by four o'clock. Good-by," and with a wave of the hand and a gay smile she moved toward the door.

"How very much like your mother you are," remarked Lizzie.

"She is a rose in a little fuller bloom—that is all—but, with not a petal withered yet. She is gayer than I am now, and has more admirers. Nothing in the world would make my mother so unhappy as the appearance of a gray hair. Monsieur Lubin, who dresses her hair, says it is the handsomest he ever saw upon a lady. The way she fights the wrinkles! Last week she thought she discovered a crow's foot, and she has not put water on her face since. She rubs it with a piece of fine flannel dipped in the 'Balm of Youth.' If she could afford it, she would preserve her bloom, as Cleopatra is rumored to have done, by a daily bath in ottar of roses. Have you finished your tea? Let us go, then. The avenue will be brilliant to-day, and I wish you to see it."

Elizabeth, having the curiosity of a stranger in regard to the sights of the metropolis, obeyed willingly the order to "don her best walking apparel," and was in readiness some time before Blanche could complete her more elaborate toilet.

"Stand forth and let me criticise," commanded the city cousin, with a mock-heroic air. "All very well indeed, *mia cara*; not remarkably splended, but *nice*! Your gloves and gaiters are all that could be desired, and they are two of the tests."

"Aristocracy and Democracy shows at the fingers and toes, does it? Well, I wish I could purchase a pair of socks and a pair of mittens for every pair of little purple feet in New York."

"Dear me! What put that in your head? How do I look?"

Blanche turned from the mirror as she asked the question, shaking out the folds of a lace-bordered handkerchief. She knew very well that she looked beautiful, but she wanted to hear it, if even from the mouth of one of her own sex.

"You dazzle me so that I cannot answer," was the smiling reply.

"That reply would have done for a gentleman;" and the two girls, in the splendor of their youth, health, wealth, and beauty, descended the broad staircase, a servant in livery opened and closed the door for them, and they passed down the marble steps to meet at their feet a beggar-woman holding out her hand.

Blanche swept by, but Elizabeth paused, took out her purse, and gave the beggar half a dollar.

"You little fool," said her cousin, as she came up to her, "don't you do that again. You will have a crowd about your door all the time. That was a professional beggar, and you do much more harm than good by indiscriminate giving. Leave your charities with the societies, whose business it is to decide upon the merits of the claimant. You will do more good in that way, and save yourself the trouble of thinking about it."

"I am sorry, Blanche, but I could not help it. I did not *know* but that she might be suffering."

"Indeed, if you go upon that principle in New York, you will soon get tired of the work. Did you remark that gentleman who bowed to me? He is one of my admirers, and mamma favors him. He is terribly homely and delightfully rich. They say he is rather 'fast;' but mamma thinks he would reform if he were married. I have neither discarded nor accepted him."

Elizabeth said nothing. The train of thought suggested was very different from any she had been accustomed to.

They glided along in their beauty, a pair even for poets to stare at—one, at least, as innocent as she was lovely, with a soul that any poet might have suffered and striven to have interested in himself. If Elizabeth had the purity of angelic unconsciousness of evil, Blanche had the purity of pride. Her brow was cold and severe beneath the burning gaze of many a covetous eye. None who prized her favor would have liked to see the indolent lids opened any wider for the fire of anger to leap from her dark eyes. She was desperately vain, but too proud to display it in public.

"Her faint half-smile was cold and sweet
As a rich ice-cream, and her little feet,
With arching instep and ankle *petite*,
Were shod like Cinderilla's.
To her hands her snowy *mouchoir* cleaves,
Like the silvery film which a spider weaves,
Swung from the points of the slender leaves
Of a pair of fragrant lilies."

"I had forgotten that Madame Follet has her opening of hats to-morrow," remarked Blanche, as they came out upon Broadway. "I like her hats the best of any that are imported, and as I am one of her most faithful customers, she told me that if I would keep it a profound secret from all her other patrons, she would allow me to come in to-day and make a private selection. Let us go! You, too, will have the same privilege, being under my wing. It's too early to wear our winter bonnets, but if we wish the first choice, we might as well purchase them now."

"I suppose, as I am to have another hat, it will be as well."

They mingled in with the gorgeous stream of ladies out upon the great business of their lives, until they turned aside into the establishment of Madame Follet.

Miss Vanderlyn was evidently in high favor here. Madame Follet, all smiles and whispers, led the way into a private apartment, where she graciously permitted them a peep at some of the choicest of her choice millinery.

"Oh, here, dear Lizzie, is a hat that was made for you! It could not suit you better. So modest and unassuming, too!" exclaimed Blanche, turning an elegant white bonnet upon its pedestal of display.

"It is indeed lovely, but too costly for me, I fear," replied Elizabeth, regarding it with favorable eyes.

"Nonsense, for ladies like you to speak of the expense," said the smiling proprietor. "It is the sweetest thing I have in the shop. Do let me try it on you, Miss Ward. There! Regard yourself in that mirror. Are you not angelic in it? You are so fair, and it suits your delicate complexion so well. Really, one might say you were *too* charming in it!"

The country girl blushed a little. She was not used to being flattered, even by a shopwoman. She asked the price.

"It is but forty dollars, mademoiselle."

"That is too much."

"Too much? Just regard well this fall of blonde. That was ten dollars a yard. And this plume, which is *the* peculiar elegance of the hat, was fifteen dollars alone. Indeed, you must see that the bonnet is lost at forty dollars!"

"I did not mean to say that you asked too much for such an article, but that I must content myself with a less expensive one. I do not wish to give more than fifteen dollars."

"Did mademoiselle say fifteen dollars?" inquired the proprietress, in a tone which Blanche very well understood, and which, if she had not been too proud, would have heightened her color.

Elizabeth was not invulnerable to it, either, half turning to her cousin, who whispered in her ear:

"I am afraid mamma will think you penurious to wear so cheap a thing, when you have plenty of money. I shall pay fifty for this which I have selected, and how can you get along with an inferior one? You are too pretty to ruin your own prospects."

The word *penurious* grated harshly upon Elizabeth's sensitive nature. Her cousin's advice and evident desire, the woman's quiet sneer, more than the consciousness of the exceeding tastefulness of the hat, caused her to break her first resolution. She paid for the forty-dollar bonnet, which was to be sent home the next evening, after being desired by half who came to the opening on that day.

We all know that one good resolution broken is like the sapping of a stone from a barrier, or the falling of a pillar from the edifice—all the others give way the more easily. Elizabeth felt the truth of this, as she sat in her room and read a chapter of the New Testament, as was her wont before retiring, the night on which the purchase was made. The advice of her aunt Faithful, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," came back with force to her mind. Blanche had told her, on her way home, that a hundred-dollar cloak would alone suit her beautiful bonnet, adding, "I shall be vain of my pet cousin, seeing I can afford not to be jealous."

The next morning, Elizabeth was up two hours before breakfast. If she had been at home in the country, she would have taken a long ramble that glorious morning. As it was, she sat by her window and read for some time. This window was pleasantly retired, looking down upon the little space of ground which Mr. Vanderlyn's wealth enabled him to retain as a flower-garden, where the worth of every foot was told by hundreds of dollars. Throwing open the sash, the air which blew in stirred her vigorous blood refreshingly. She thought she would wander down into the conservatory, and from thence into the garden, now barren of all its summer array. Leaving her cousin still asleep, she stole out. The conservatory was sweet—almost too oppressively so, and she passed on out of doors, gathering a sprig of evergreen or myrtle here and there, as an excuse for wandering about. Her cheeks were red as roses when she came in, and John, the gardener, who evidently admired her, cut one of his choicest hot-house roses and presented her, as she stopped to speak with him of the flowers. When she entered the breakfast parlor, there was no one at the table but her uncle Vanderlyn. She came forward, smiling and animated, "a sight to make an old man young," so fresh, so buoyant, and such a contrast to the languid morning air of his wife and daughter whenever they did honor him with their company that he doubly appreciated it.

"Will you accept my morning offering?" she asked playfully as she laid the myrtle and rose beside his plate.

"Ah, thank you! I will take them to Wall street with me to remind me of home," he answered, gallantly affixing them to his coat."

"Why do you go to Wall street every day, uncle? It seems to me that you might now rest upon your laurels, and withdraw from the hurry and care of business. You are rich enough."

"With such a family as mine! Ah, you do not know! They still cry 'Give, give!' There's Philip, the extravagant dog, and Blanche, and

my wife the worst of all. No, no! I must work! Besides, it has become so a habit with me that I do not know what I should do with my time. What could I do? I should be bored to death with idleness."

"Enjoy this luxurious home, uncle Philip—the library, your carriage, the society of your family. Blanche's fine music, every thing. And then travel part of the time."

"Oh, I do go to Newport, or somewhere, every season, and play billiards to pass the time, while Blanche and her mother dress and flirt. But it's not so very amusing. I used to think I should like to be at home more, but there's too much company. I get tired of it. Wife and daughter live to please other men—don't care much about me, except when they want money, and then how pretty they can be! Still, they're good—better than most, and I like them. Wife looks superb at the head of the table at dinner. Proud of her. To tell the truth, I have been a business man so long that I have lost my taste for reading. Used to be quite scholarly once, but the daily papers are about all I get through with now. Sometimes I stay at home evenings, sometimes go to the opera, sometimes to the club."

"I shall love the opera, I know," said Elizabeth, while her secret heart was pondering upon how solitary in wishes and tastes she was in most things. She should not have a friend and adviser in her uncle's family, she saw very plainly.

She felt interested in her uncle Vanderlyn. She thought she could discern the elements of what should have been a better or a greater man. Often was his name appended to liberal sums contributed toward fashionable objects of benevolence, but in his home circle she saw none of the small droppings of charity; nor could she discover that he had any other object in all his scheming, than to keep up his position, and his family well supplied with money. She had come to New York with an earnest purpose to do some good work, especially for her own sex, and longed to talk with her uncle about it, as she could have done with her father had he been alive. This, at present, was impossible. Her heart yearned, too, for the affection which even his own child did not covet so much as she—an orphan, who must have something and somebody to love, lavishly, earnestly.

"I will win him by a thousand thoughtful attentions, to give me, too, a part of his affections," she thought.

"Uncle Philip," she said, suddenly, looking up when breakfast was finished, "I wish you would let me love you and wait upon you as a daughter."

"Wait upon me!" he replied with a smile; "Blanche leaves that to the servants. She has

not done so much for me in a month as you have in giving me this flower. It has sweetened my breakfast. But you shall be my second daughter—yes, indeed!” and seeing the tears were in her eyes, he came round and kissed her, before he buttoned his heart up in his coat, preparatory to a day among the stock-jobbers and money-brokers.

Neither Mrs. Vanderlyn nor Blanche came down to breakfast, but had it served in their rooms; after which they arose, to prepare for visitors, as it was their “reception” day. They expected an unwonted number of calls on account of the beautiful weather; but, more particularly, as they had given notice to their friends that a young lady, pretty and an heiress, was to be added to their family.

“All these calls to return—all this circle of acquaintance to keep up,” thought Elizabeth, when the fatiguing day was over.

The evening was comparatively quiet, and she was rewarded for her efforts in meeting strangers all day by some fine music. Elizabeth could sing a clear, beautiful alto, which delighted Blanche, as it aided and accompanied her brilliant tones. She was surprised to find her cousin’s musical education equal to her own. Music was one of the things which Blanche really liked, aside from its being one of her “cards.”

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR PHILIP.

“How few, like thee, inquire the wretched out,
And court the offices of soft humanity!
Like thee, reserve their raiment for the naked,
Reach out their bread to feed the dying orphan,
Or mix the pitying tears with those that weep.”

PHILIP VANDERLYN, junior, or Dr. Philip, as Blanche loved best to call him, came home after a five years’ absence, during which he had seen his relatives twice—once when they spent a month in Paris, and once when he paid a flying visit to his native city. His family were delighted to have him at home. Blanche shed three tears upon his breast when he arrived, and could hardly wait to see the presents he had brought for her. That the long absence of his only boy had been something of a trial to him, may be inferred from the fact that now, whenever Philip was to spend an evening at home, his father remained also, enjoying his merry small-talk, and laughing even at some rather doubtful stories of the young gentleman’s own experience.

Elizabeth had wondered what she should think of her cousin. Now she found him an insufferable fop. At least this was her first opinion. He had eyed her critically when introduced, and had been very conceited and condescending. She had expected that he would at

least be intelligent, for she had understood that, notwithstanding his wildness, he studied with painful assiduity when he did study. But he was worse, a hundred times worse as a man, than Blanche was as a woman; and his beauty did not keep his cousin from despising him. She kept out of his way as much as possible. If she could get into a quiet nook of the library, with some beloved book, she was content. Or into her own room, where Blanche too often followed her, tormenting her unwittingly with ceaseless talk upon subjects interesting to herself alone. Now that Blanche had a handsome brother to go everywhere with her, and whose time she would monopolize, she was less persevering in her attentions to her cousin. Elizabeth began to re-form the schemes which had been nearly driven out of her mind. Her aunt laughed at her when she found that she had been visiting the ragged schools, and had held two or three consultations with Mr. Pease, and that, on Thanksgiving day, she had given twenty-five dollars for the children’s dinner. The class in which she felt the most interest was that of the respectable sewing-women who depended upon slop-shops or chance custom. Her heart burned with the story of their great wrongs. She longed to consult some intelligent and philanthropic person as to ways and means for *permanently* bettering their condition. As she could find none such around her, she finally wrote to her pastor, Mr. Hastings. The noble impulses which that letter betrayed, filled him with a strange joy. He answered it as best he could; and one letter led to another, until there was quite a steady correspondence, and all upon the subject which first began it. His advice was very much prized by Elizabeth, and served often in the place of a friend nearer at hand. It encouraged her, too; often giving her strength to resist the fascinations of example and entreaty. Still, she was not up to her ideal—she could not reach it; she was so far below it that sometimes she felt altogether discouraged with herself.

“What a consummate dandy Philip is!” she thought, indignantly, one day as she was hurrying along the street alone. What had called up the thought at this time more particularly, had been the supercilious way in which he had bowed to her as she had passed him, a short time before. So much conceit was intolerable! She turned down a by-street, for she was out to visit a sick woman whom a charitable society had recommended to her especial notice. She found the number, knocked softly, and went in, when whom would she see but her intolerable cousin Philip, holding the hand of the dying woman, as he sat beside her and wiped the death-sweat from her brow. No one perceived her, and she stood still,

"I pledge you my honor," said her cousin, in a grave, sweet voice, "that your children shall be provided for. I will see that they have all they need at present, and that soon they shall be provided with good homes in the country. Do not be so distressed for them. He who will not let even a sparrow fall to the ground unnoticed will surely care for them."

"It was He who sent you to me, I am sure," whispered the woman. "You will be blessed—your youth will be joy to you, and your old age honored. But for you—"

"Do not try to speak," he interrupted her, gently. "I have done but little, yet I will do more. Compose yourself, and be at peace, for your little ones shall fare better than they have done."

"I am—at—peace," gasped his companion.

Truly she was, for the death-pallor came over her face, and in a moment she breathed no more. Two or three children clambered about the bed, sobbing and screaming.

As Philip composed the dead woman's hands upon her breast, she saw him drop a tear.

"Cousin Philip, is this you?" she asked, coming to his side. He looked around quickly.

"Well! supposing it is? What business have *you* wandering around in these bad localities? Some day you will be found missing!"

"I have no fears upon that score; at least, not enough to keep me at home. But, Philip?" and she looked up into his face with a questioning look, as much as to ask where all its conceit and indifference had gone to.

Philip had admired his cousin much more than he had allowed her to see; when he *had* complimented her, it had usually been in a manner not pleasing to her fastidious taste—it had seemed as if he had only done it to provoke her. Now, he said:

"You are a pearl among women, Lizzie. Does Blanche never accompany you on these excursions?—for I am aware they are almost of daily occurrence with you."

"No," replied she, unwilling to cast a shadow of blame upon any one, "she is so happy, so admired and busy, she has no time. But she gives to many a good cause. She handed me five dollars as I was coming out, for charitable purposes; yet I know she wanted to get herself a new fan."

"Wonderful self-denial! I am afraid it will make her ill—especially as she has so few fans," replied Philip, in his usual mocking tone. "Blanche dresses seraphically, doesn't she, Lizzie? I do love to see a beautiful woman beautifully dressed. By the way, cousin, you are not remarkable for a superb toilet;

neat enough, but you do not do yourself justice. Are you so poor?"

"It is a strange subject to introduce *here*," and Elizabeth turned away to console the crying children.

"I do not wish you to think that I have been doing any thing *good*," continued Philip. "I abominate goodness. I happened to be called as this woman's physician. Can I do any thing for you, cousin Lizzie?"

"If you will find some neighbor who is willing to take charge here for the night, I will see that she is well paid. In the mean time, I will give these poor children some supper."

While he was gone for a watcher, she soothed the little ones with many gentle words and promises, and set forth before their longing eyes a comfortable repast, which she took from a small basket she had brought with her.

When they had completed arrangements to insure decency and attention to the dead and comfort to the living the cousins walked home together. Philip was as gay as ever, but Elizabeth was certain she had made a discovery of a portion of his nature which he kept hidden from the eyes of his friends. He was more of an enigma to her than before; consequently more interesting. If you pique a woman's curiosity, you have a certain hold upon her interest; her imagination is greater than a man's, investing all untangible things with more importance than they deserve. Fools and villains may put on a sad, mysterious air, and adopt the "grand, gloomy, and peculiar," and be successful in winning the consideration of tolerably sensible women.

"If he was not *such* a fop," murmured Lizzie to her pillow that night, as it nestled close to her glowing cheek, "he would be quite—endurable."

The next morning he came and sat down by her, while Blanche was flirting with a morning caller, and they had a long, and, to her, interesting conversation, upon poetry, esthetics, etc. Just as her face was all lighted up with lovely animation, he quenched the light suddenly, by observing, carelessly:

"*Voilà!* you know too much! Girls should not have opinions. There's Blanche—she is my ideal of a woman—don't know an equation from the equator. Look at her! Don't you think I ought to be proud of such a sister? I did not see her equal in all France."

Elizabeth was really lost by the beginning of this speech. Her cousin had charmed and surprised her by his stores of knowledge, and had led her on into unwonted communicativeness; had purposely awakened her spiritual nature by many an eloquent touch, until it had expanded, pure as a lily in the sunlight—and now, how quickly the frost nipped it.

"Oh! it is very true! a woman should have no soul, no perception, no will, but what is graciously vouchsafed her by some lord of her being," she replied with bitterness; and rising, she went to the piano (the visitor having departed) and played fast and hard all the noisy, meaningless, bravado music she could think of.

"I like to strike the fire from such a jewel as that," whistled Philip, under his breath; and flinging himself into an easy-chair, he listened with half-shut eyes.

When she had wearied herself she turned to leave the room, and there was Philip leaning on the corner of the instrument.

"You remind me of Tennyson's 'Princess,'" said he, "and I long to be the Prince who whispered:

"If thou be what I think thee, some sweet dream,
I do but ask thee to fulfill thyself."

"My temper is not a 'harp of a thousand strings,' for you to 'smile on its—all its chords with might,'" she answered, having subdued her little burst of injured feeling, "so keep your flatteries for some more eager ear. I am going to my room to write letters."

She went to her room and wrote to her aunt Faithful and to Mr. Hastings. Her mood was such as to tinge her letter with just that shade of melancholy which made the receiver wonder at the cause, and linger over the words with dangerous interest.

"Here you are up here staining your fingers with ink, when Mr. Thompson has been waiting fifteen minutes for you to make your appearance. I left him with Dr. Philip looking at some coins which he brought from Europe, while I went to look for you!" exclaimed Blanche, running into their chamber, just as Lizzie had finished her second epistle.

"I guess you will be able to entertain Mr. Thompson without my assistance, my dear, and I do not feel one bit like trying to interest myself in his disagreeabilities."

"What a girl you are! Here's a widower, without children, not over fifty years old, and worth eight hundred thousand dollars; dresses well, is used to good society, and madly in love with you, yet you treat him as coolly as if he was some penniless poet of sweet eighteen. I do not believe you care a gold dollar for all the conquests you have made since you came to New York."

"I certainly do not; I have yet to meet the man who comes within the faintest shadow of the ideal man, upon whose brow I have set the shining mark. Oh, Blanche, how *can* you waste your time, and wit, and beauty upon such a set as you have about you?"

"There! there! there!"

"I don't intend to preach; but I must observe that of all the beetles, butterflies and other ephemera who flutter about this mansion,

this Mr. Thompson is the most repulsive and bat-like. If he had ten times the fortune which he has, I could *never* be more than coldly polite to him. How did he get his wealth?—ask him that. I should think Philip would be afraid to show him his coins, for fear he would slyly pilfer them."

"Why, Elizabeth!" laughed Blanche.

"It is strange how the glitter of gold blinds eyes, even those as bright and pure as my dear cousin's. Don't go near him, Blanche; don't allow him to touch your hand or your shawl, or even to look upon you! That is the way for pure women to treat such men! Then we would have less villainy in high places."

"You are the queerest girl! Every one—almost—treats Mr. Thompson with respect. He is a great favorite with the young ladies."

"Who would sell every thing but the outside appearance of propriety, for such ample means of gratifying their ambition to be first in display—most extravagant in dress."

"How disagreeable you can make yourself, for such a nice girl. Well, I must make your apologies I suppose, to your adorer. Now, don't look grieved. I hate him myself!—wouldn't have him if he was the last man on the face of the earth! But I must be civil to him."

She darted off like a lark, caroling, while Elizabeth went to Mrs. Vanderlyn's room, who really was ill that morning with the headache, and begged to be permitted to do something for her. Her voice was so soft, and her touch so gentle, that the lady was glad to send away her maid and accept her services instead.

Mrs. Vanderlyn sat in an invalid's easy-chair, well tipped back on its rockers, and a handkerchief tied about her brows. Her niece removed the bandage, took down all her heavy hair, brushed it out, and left it floating about her shoulders, while, with a soothing touch, she passed her hands over the aching head, and soon magnetized the nervous pain almost entirely away.

"I believe you are a magician—you have nearly cured me," said her aunt, gratefully.

"Then you have no need of my services," said Philip, who had at that moment stolen into the room. "I came to offer them, but will withdraw. Let me warn you, though, my lady-mother, against employing empirics—it is a dangerous experiment."

"You have always something foolish to say," replied his mother, looking at her handsome boy with a smile, and thinking how much he resembled herself.

He placed a bouquet of exquisite flowers in a little Bohemian vase upon her dressing-table.

"I will not bring them near enough to cause the offending headache to return by their perfume, but you can feast your eyes upon them,

my beautiful mother, and think of the faults of the giver."

"I am much obliged to you for remembering me, I am sure, Philip. They are full as pretty as those Baron Steimbrack brought me last evening for the opera. If you will leave me now, children, I think I can sleep a little, and awake entirely recovered."

She gave them her plump, white hand, sparkling with diamonds. Philip kissed it, while he pressed his own to his heart with an impressive air.

"Is that as gracefully done as the baron can do it?"

"Go away, you foolish boy. Take him away, Lizzie, my love."

The cousins went down and found Blanche looking for her brother.

"Oh, Lizzie, Philip, come and see! I wonder *who* did it? It could not be papa, for I had never said a word to him about wanting it. And he is no judge of these things. And this was selected by a person of the most perfect taste!"

"Ah!" groaned her brother.

She had unfolded a packet which had just arrived, addressed to herself, and displayed a robe-silk of the most delicate bloom-color, faint and fair as the inner fold of an apple-blossom. It was the very thing she had been wishing for, in time to make up for New Year's day.

"It's a very handsome present," continued the delighted girl. "I saw it yesterday, when you and I were passing the shop, Philip, and I wondered then how I could contrive to coax it out of papa, for my own allowance was spent long ago. It was marked seventy-five dollars. And, oh, Lizzie, there was a blue one of the same pattern as this, that you *must* buy. It will just suit your style, and be so lovely!"

"You know that I can not afford to purchase so expensive a silk—especially after all the new things I have been getting."

"Oh, but you *must* get this, darling, to match mine! I saw a hundred-dollar check in your purse yesterday, and yet you pretend that you can not afford it."

"I admired that blue silk very much, myself, Lizzie," added Philip. "It is a tint that not many ladies can wear to advantage. I should like to see you in it. I venture to affirm that the whole circle of this extensive city will not furnish a more distinguished pair of beautiful belles—each so different in her style, and so perfect in the type. Really, I shall have to call upon you myself, ladies, and pay the meed of admiration. And be sure, cousin Lizzie, that you wear the blue dress. I want to see you in it. I have a fancy that you will fill my ideal of a blonde. Do not let any New England notions of economy prevent you from

doing your own beauty justice, and carrying out the pretty conceit of the twin dresses."

Philip could look so persuasive, when he wished, that it was almost impossible to deny a request of his; still, his cousin shook her head, with a downcast look, and said:

"I cannot promise you, flattering as you are."

Lizzie was not invulnerable to emotions of female vanity; the desire to look well in Philip's eyes was stronger than she would acknowledge. In the secrecy of her own heart she pondered the matter. The phrase, "New England economy," grated upon her ear harshly as coming from *him*. The native strength of her character came to her, and enabled her to cast it out of her mind. It is true that she had a hundred dollars in her purse, and should have more before very long. But she had formed a plan for spending it differently. There was a woman employed by Mrs. Vanderlyn to do her sewing, whenever she had any that could be sent from the house. She was a widow, with three young children to care for, and, consequently could not go out to sew. Lizzie had seen her several times, and had become more than usually interested in her. She had been reared in very different circumstances; in her youth had been the pet of a happy home, been tenderly cared for and well educated. But, like so many loving and trusting young girls, she had married a man not worthy of her—one who abused her confidence, and who finally died of a fever, brought on by excesses, leaving her with little means and this young family. She had struggled on, as women must struggle when left dependent; had tried all the narrow and crowded avenues to a living left open for women to choose from; had kept boarders, and lost what little she had by it; had taught a select school, taking her own little ones to and from it with her, and waiting upon them, doing all her work out of school hours; had met with more disappointments, insults, meanness and want, than need here be told, and was now wearing out her life, as women wear them out, at the everlasting stitching, to keep bread, without butter generally, in the mouths of her children.

Elizabeth, as was natural to her, had interested herself in this personage, a lady and a Christian, a coldly-treated sewing-woman. She had taken work to her humble door, and, while leaving her orders, had fallen into pleasant conversation, which, at times, grew confidential on the part of the widow, so little used to sympathy.

"Why do you not go to the country," she asked her one day, "and secure steady patronage in some village? The means of living would be cheaper, and the prices much better,

it is a mistake for so many to stay in the city."

"But it is hard to get out of it," was the reply. "I have never been able to lay up enough to take us safely out and settle us in a new place. Besides, it is hard for a stranger to find employment, even in a country village. Oh, if I had a sewing-machine! I could do my work with so much more dispatch that I need not wear out my life in this manner. But, in this, as in every thing else, men come in with their capital, and turn the blessings into a curse. Men buy up the right to make sewing-machines, men purchase at a price far beyond the reach of the toiling needle-women, and put them into their tailor-shops, and skirt-manufactories, and shirt stores, and cloak depots, taking the crumbs out of the mouths of widows' children, and adding it to their own overflowing stores."

"It is all too true," sighed Elizabeth.

That evening, the case of this one sufferer weighing upon her mind, she had formed a plan which sent her to bed with a smile upon her face, and gave her such sweet sleep as the good alone enjoy. By a little, very little self-denial, she could save this mother to her helpless flock, and bestow a benefit which would be life-long. She resolved to take the hundred-dollar check and purchase a sewing-machine for her seamstress, and send it to her as a New Year's present. This she would do now, and, in the spring, if the widow wished, she would furnish her with means and recommendations to set up in some rural place, where her children could feel the greensward under their feet, and grow up upon healthy air.

The thought made her unusually happy all the morning. She had fully decided upon the deed when the robe came home for Blanche, and the temptation was set before her. It was not the dress she wanted so much as to please Philip, and to look well dressed in his eyes. She could not get the robe and the sewing-machine both at that time. She remembered that she already had spent much more upon herself, and less upon others, than she had designed. Yet, she might get the machine and make the widow happy at some future time, say a couple of months, when money was plenty again—the dress *would* be so becoming, and please *Blanche* so! But, what if the health of the overtaxed seamstress should give way entirely, while she was taking a little foolish pleasure in a blue silk robe that she did not need?

The young girl went to her pillow less happy than on the previous evening, but she arose the next morning to go out after breakfast and select a sewing-machine, for which she paid, with orders to have it sent to its destination upon the first day of the new year. Then she

went home gay and gleesome, with no further thought of the coveted dress. She told no one, not even uncle Vanderlyn, to whom she sometimes confided her benevolent plans. They would only call her silly—half laugh and half scowl at her; and it was reward enough to have the consciousness that she had resisted a temptation very powerful to a pretty young girl.

When New Year's day, with all its splendor and excitement, was over, the account of it which she wrote for the amusement of her aunt Faithful was not tinged with one shade of envy or discontent because she had received calls in a less elegant dress than Blanche.

"Blanche was beautiful," she wrote, "and ja-enough conscious of it to put her in the most brilliant spirits. She was evidently very much admired. Aunt Vanderlyn scarcely less so. Her dress was rich—velvet and lace of the costliest kind, relieved by diamonds.

"We were overwhelmed with calls from morning till midnight. This being my first 'New Year's' in the city, I was amused at the beginning, but disgusted at the conclusion. Of course we had wine upon the table, and of course everybody else had. I am sure that uncle Vanderlyn, upon any other occasion, would have had the servants put some of the visitors out of doors, had they appeared in his parlors in so maudlin a state. Am I fault-finding? I am afraid I am growing less charitable than I ought to be."

CHAPTER IV.

"Airy, fairy Lillien,
Flitting, fairy Lillien."

These pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and down;
But never more they saw the man
Approaching from the town.

Thus wandered these two pretty babes
Till death did end their grief,
In one another's arms they died,
As babes wanting relief.

The Children in the Wood.

Two fairies sat in a gorgeous bower. Their names were Blanche and Elizabeth. Not in a bower like Titania's, where the green woods glimmer in the moonlight, but in the boudoir which terminated Mrs. Vanderlyn's magnificent suit of parlors. Nor were these fairies like those tantalizing creatures who shake their scarfs at you from the vanishing rainbow, or hide their evanescent beauty in the heart of some dew-bespangled flower. They were those more precious household fairies who win pet names, of such substantial make, and burdened with such pressing wants that a large purse full of money barely suffices for their "absolute necessities."

Shall we say that Elizabeth, the smaller, demurer fairy of the two, was fast following in the footsteps of her extravagant cousin?

It was twelve o'clock of a clear, cold February day; but here you could hardly have told that summer was not still a lingerer. The atmosphere was of genial warmth, the songs of

birds were tangled amid the lace draperies of this boudoir, whose windows opened upon a conservatory so large and so blooming that a tropic garden seemed transplanted into it.

Blanche was lounging in an easy-chair; and no rich-breathed rose ever leaned amid her clustering leaves with a more dreamy indolence, than she amid the cushions of damask around her.

Elizabeth, in a morning *neglige* of dark-blue silk, which set off the faint bloom of her cheeks, and the dainty fairness of her throat and hands, was down upon the carpet, with heaps of music all in disorder about her, and a guitar lying across her lap.

"I have broken the string, and I have no patience to mend it with a new one," she said. "I declare, Blanche, we have so much to do that we have no time left for our own pleasure. I've been trying these two days to read that new book Philip gave me. But what, with breakfast at nine, and music to practice, and the dressmaker, and going out in the carriage these brief afternoons, and dinner, and company in the evening, one has no time for the improvement of the mind, or any other sensible object. Philip says we ought to improve our minds."

"Does he?" replied Blanche, with an accent of infinite scorn. "I presume our minds are a match for his—the conceited dandy. The next time I see him I will tell him that his curls need improving; he prides himself upon his beautiful hair, and I intend to mortify him."

Here there was a low chuckle in the next room, but they did not hear it. The sunbeam went on tying its threads to Blanche's hair, while Elizabeth's hand wandered tenderly over her guitar.

"I know it seems to me as if we were always busy," resumed the former. "Papa thinks we have nothing to do! That's just the way with these men!"

"It seems to me as if we wasted a great deal of valuable time. I spend mine very differently from what I had intended before I came here. I seem to have got into a whirlpool of gayety—all spray and bubbles, dancing in the sunshine, fascinating to look at, but bearing me round and round, and evermore back to the starting-point, except that I sink a little deeper with every circle. I wonder what Mr. Hastings would say!"

"Fie! how serious you are. You talk like an essay. Who is Mr. Hastings?"

"He is my minister."

"And you've been giving me a piece of one of his sermons, I suppose. How stupid he must be!"

"He is far from stupid," replied Elizabeth, flushing.

"Ah! is he a young man—or has he, like most country ministers, a wife and nine small children?"

"No matter," was the answer, in so vexed a tone that Blanche laughed—it was not often she could tease her cousin.

"Never mind, Lizzie, dear, for you need not tell me. I can infer that he has neither wife nor children as yet." (Here there was a slight rustle, as of an impatient movement in the next apartment.) "By the way, I wonder if our forty-second cousin, Bessie Bell, intends accepting our invitation to spend a week with us. She's a nice little thing. I can make her perfectly happy by giving her some of my cast-off dresses."

"That you've worn three times," laughed Elizabeth.

"We'll dress her up so that she will be quite presentable. The truth is, I like her better than I do my envious, elegant friends; she's such a candid little goose."

"Won't she even tell a white lie?" queried Lizzie, who had found that white lies were current in fashionable society.

"No; and she has no vanity."

"Does Philip know her?"

"I presume he does not remember her. I wonder if he will like her? I should be in doubt about it; he is so fastidious. If he loves any thing besides his own sweet self, it is to see an elegantly-attired, self-possessed woman of the world."

"Nobody cares whether he likes her or not," quoth Lizzie, breaking another string with a twang.

The noise which she thus made concealed an ominous "Hem!" proceeding from the other room. If Lizzie had told a "white lie" in that sentence, she was herself unaware of it at the moment.

"I hate any one who considers himself perfect, and takes the liberty of lecturing other people," she continued, with some energy.

"Ah, yes!" murmured Blanche, languidly playing with the tassel of her girdle, "still, Lizzie, I think Philip knows how to be very agreeable. He dances exquisitely. Grace Livingston would die to please him."

"She's in love with his fortune. However, I do not blame you for liking him—he's your brother."

"And your second cousin," added Blanche, with a gay laugh. "But here comes the lunch which I ordered brought here, for I feel indolent this morning. Come, let us have a nice quiet luncheon, all by ourselves."

"Not quite by yourselves," said a voice, which they knew too well, and Philip emerged from his concealment in the bay-window of the adjoining parlor. "Exercise your hospitality, mesdemoiselles"—and he ran his fingers

affectedly through his hair, as he stood waiting to be offered a seat at the board.

"Listeners never hear any thing good of themselves," said Lizzie, trying to suppress a blush, which grew the rosier for her efforts.

"That must be because mortals—especially women—are so given to saying hard things. Who would think so much beauty was the vail for so much uncharitableness? But, sister Blanche, you *must* give me a cup of tea. I had no breakfast this morning. I was called out at eight o'clock to set the leg of a poor laborer, who fell from a building, and bruised himself terribly."

"What will you gain by going among such people?—not the fame for which you are so ambitious," spoke his sister.

"I shall gain the consciousness of having relieved human misery, my dear," responded the young physician, gravely. "Not that I wish to be considered good," he added, quickly. "I hate charity—I hate philanthropy. Everybody knows there is nothing *good* about me."

Elizabeth looked at him with softening eyes. She was beginning to see further into the labyrinths of Philip's character.

"Why should you put such a scornful accent upon the word good?" she asked.

"Because the kind of people whom I detest are so fearfully good. The Scribes and Pharisees were, you remember. Your 'Rev. Cream Cheeses' are *good*, and so are your sallow-cheeked deacons who delight in threatening little children with everlasting tortures. Brokers and stock-jobbers, and those who prey upon widows and orphans, are, I know, generally *very* pious—influentially so. There's father! he owns a church and a minister—he has made a fashionable thing of it—and the shares are rising. It is a very good *speculation*. Mother's a member, too, and would not miss a communion any more than she would the rich dinner she keeps the servants busy in the mean time preparing."

"Oh, Philip, how can you talk so? You have not a particle of reverence in your composition."

"Nor a drop of tea in my cup. A little more, if it please your highness to be so generous."

Hours before the persons enacting this *tableau vivant* had slipped from beneath their downy coverlids, their "forty-second cousin, Bessie," had deserted her chamber in the old farm-house, and gone out of doors with a milk-pail on her arm.

As she stepped off the wooden "stoop," which fringed the dining-room door, she drew in her breath with a sigh of surprise, and stood in mute delight, regarding the marvelous transfiguration of the landscape. A silent spirit

from the cloud-realms above had been busy all night—and now, what a beautiful work was completed before her! The familiar yard with its long well-sweep, its picket fence, its rows of currant bushes ranged beneath, its high clustered locust trees, with the rose-vine by the stoop, all so brown, so bleak, the previous evening, were converted into a fairy bower, more exquisite than mortal hands ever elaborated.

"All had suffered a *snow-change*,
Into something rich and strange."

The snow had come down damp and thick, clinging to every branch of the old trees, and every spray of the bushes, and every symmetrical picket, so long as a flake could find a point to hang by. The well-curb and the low bushes looked like couches of swan's down, spread out for the repose of some invisible beauty. The trees were burdened so heavily that there was a soft gloom underneath, wrapping the scene in mystic quiet and repose. Bessie looked through the dreamy vistas, while to her eyes the interlaced boughs of the motionless trees formed arched windows lofty and intricate as the famous work in ancient cathedrals. No alabaster ever was so white as the pure material of this enchanted bower. Yet so bright was it, as the daylight strengthened, that it seemed as if it might have flaked off from the silver stars, and dropped down in gleaming radii. Stillness, both of motion and sound, reigned absolute. Bessie felt all the beauty of the time, pausing, herself so rosy and active, as if the spell were working upon her, and she might momentarily grow into a dream or a statue. But she bloomed on like a single rose in a garden of lilies, and a red ray shot from the quiver of the rising sun, piercing the bowery gloom, and striking her where she stood, deluging her cheeks with crimson, her eyes with light and her hair with gold. The sleepy chanticleer in the barnyard gave a shrill scream to find he had slumbered so late, and was answered here and there through the distance, by his cheery brotherhood. The cows lowed indolently as if still oppressed with dreams of summer pastures. Bessie, giving her milk-pail a swing, plunged into the untrodden path. The snow lay all around her so soft and deep that she could not resist the temptation to ruffle its unsoiled page. Breaking a stick from a lilac-bush, with this rude graver she traced figures and flowers with considerable skill upon its yielding surface. As the sun rose in his full splendor, glorifying the world at a glance, some lines from Tennyson's *Arabian Nights* came into her mind, and she wrote them down upon a page as pure as her own young heart:

Six columns—three on either side—
Pure silver, underpropt a rich

'Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down drooped, in many a floating fold
Engarlanded and draperied
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
Thereon, his deep eye, laughter-stirred
With merriment of kingly pride,
Sole star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
The good Haroun Alraschid!

Then she looked furtively into the enchanted bower, as if the magic lines might have called up the king to sit upon the well-sweep. No king was there. She went on a little further, tracing thoughtfully, it may be unconsciously, the initials "J. A." These she duplicated many times as she passed along, and once she wrote the name in full—"Jesse Allen." Just then her brother Will coming, whistling from the house, with a blush she blotted out the tell-tale record, and sped onward to the barnyard, where her own pet cow awaited her milking.

Bessie did not stop to snowball her brother, as he would have liked, but hurried through with her task and back to the house; for it was a great day with her, and she must needs haste. At nine o'clock the train passed the station on its way to the city; she must make ready and ride two miles in order to reach it; for she had accepted her cousin Blanche Vanderlyn's invitation to spend a week in New York.

Philip was passing his cup for the third time, when a fuller burst of sunshine brightened the boudoir, and the three, looking up, beheld Bessie, all wrapped in cloaks and mufflers, but as bright as a winter-berry peering out of a snow-drift. The girls gave her a welcome affectionate enough to satisfy a more exacting nature than hers, and presented Philip, who made some pretty speeches about renewing old acquaintance.

More luncheon was ordered for the newcomer. When the gay repast was finished, Blanche proposed that Bessie, if not too much fatigued, should accompany them upon their shopping expedition, as they did not like to leave her so soon after her arrival. She was not at all fatigued, and was as eager to go as most young girls would be when making a holiday trip to the metropolis.

Philip threw himself upon a sofa, and tried to look handsome—in which attempt, it must be confessed, he succeeded, to Lizzie's infinite distaste, who threw a glance at him from beneath her drooping lashes, as she turned to leave the room, to make ready for the carriage. No sooner had the two girls vanished, than he shook off his air of languor and vanity, sat up like a man possessed of health and vigor, and proceeded to entertain Bessie in a manner which surprised her. Places he had visited, people he had known in the old country, scenery, customs, pictures, he talked of in a

sensible, lively way. To see her innocent face light up with interest was stimulus enough to make him exert himself more to please her than he had any other person since his return. Elizabeth would hardly have recognized the conceited young physician, who loved to display his "foreign graces" as if on purpose to call forth her contempt, and she heard him entertaining their visitor.

The moment she returned he put off all the eloquence which had held Bessie enchanted, and begged to be allowed to accompany the ladies, as there still was a vacant seat in the carriage.

"But Blanche is going to the dressmaker's. How could you go there? You would get out of patience waiting."

"I do not purpose to wait, nor to have you wait. We can leave her at Mrs. Flummery's, and drive about the city until it is time to call for her."

"Of course you will have your own way," said Lizzie, and there was a triumphant smile upon his lip, as if he meant it.

When Blanche came down, flushed with the magnificence of her beauty and appareling, Bessie cast an uneasy look over her own modest attire. Blanche noticed it, and smiled.

"Do not fret yourself, *mia cara*; that graceful head of yours in its little black velvet hat will look very well from a carriage window. Come, all, or we shall not get home for dinner."

The horses pranced, their harness glittering in the sun, and the tasteful equipage, with its gay, handsome, and happy party, swept down the avenue.

"Oh dear! Do look! Will you not stop the carriage a moment?" cried Bessie, as they passed a church.

"That is one of our finest churches; I do not wonder that you admire it," remarked Blanche.

"I was not thinking of the church at all. Those little children, there, upon the steps. Cousin Philip, will you not tell the coachman to stop until we can give them some money?"

The snow, which had fallen so heavily fifty miles back in the country, had touched the city but lightly, and had mostly disappeared from the streets. It lurked here and there in corners, soiled by coal-dust, and looking but a wretched relationship to that purity which had charmed the country girl at sunrise. Some of its draggled wreaths were broken about the church steps; and, shrinking away from these into a spot which the sunlight touched with wintry warmth, was a group of three little beggars, holding out their purple hands, and vainly trying to shelter their pinched feet beneath their dreary rags. The two oldest were girls of eight and ten, and beneath them nestled a little brother.

"Pshaw," said Philip, "you will see such sights at every corner. Those are regular little villains, I'll warrant."

"If they are not," said Blanche, "their parents are, and will take away whatever we give them, and spend it for rum. It is really an injury to society to encourage them and their parents in such idleness."

"But these are too small to work, and they look so hungry. Indeed, I can not bear to pass them without giving them a little," pleaded Bessie. Blanche laughed.

"How unsophisticated you are, little one. You remind me of Lizzie when she first came here. I have lectured her out of it pretty well, as far as giving to *street* beggars is concerned; though I suspect she makes a simpleton of herself a great many times when I know nothing of it. I have heard of some of her shy doings! That sewing-machine, you remember, Philip, that took the place of the silk dress."

"And that consumptive school-teacher, whose board she is paying so that she can rest awhile from her labors," added Philip.

Elizabeth blushed. She did not know that her charities were discovered. She was as modest as generous.

"That has nothing to do with these children," she said. "I really wish we had given them something. They looked so dejected, so forlorn. Oh, to think that such childhood is, and must be!—here, all about us, little immortal souls tainted at their very birth, little sensitive bodies pinched by want before they can stand alone! And all for no sin of their own. They had no power over their own birth, no choice of the circumstances which surround them. Angels must weep at the sight; yet we have become so hardened to it, in this Christian city, that we do not realize the facts. Each one says, 'It is no business of mine;' the philosopher says, 'It is a necessary evil of human society,'—and we go on building churches and palaces of gorgeous beauty over, as Dr. Chapin says, 'these cellars, this understrata, that heaves with volcanic vice and misery beneath their foundations.'"

"And to think that little children actually go to bed hungry," added Bessie, the tears coming into her eyes.

"How serious you all are, I declare. Lizzie, I shall fine you for spoiling the pleasure of this glorious afternoon. Here we are in Broadway. Now open both those innocent eyes, Bessie, for the display to-day is quite brilliant."

"Nothing affects my dear sister's happiness but a wrinkle in a new dress," spoke Philip, in one of his provoking tones. "But here we are at Madame Flummery's—that's her name, isn't it?—and I hope the dress will set well,

that we may not find a cloud upon that peerless brow when we return."

Blanche's indolent eyes flashed for a moment, but she concluded to smile, for she was very fond of her brother, taking his compliments and contempt usually with equal good nature.

When shopping and sight-seeing were done, they drove home in the early twilight. It had grown cold and clear, but not still; there was a sharp wind, not blustering but searching, that made the blood curdle at its touch.

"Ah, how chilly it is," shivered Blanche, as she stepped from the carriage, drawing her five hundred-dollar fur cape closer about her.

"How pleasant home seems to-night," said Philip, as they gathered in the luxurious parlors, and all assented with unusual earnestness.

They lingered long at the dinner-table. The ladies chatted over their coffee, the gentlemen laughed over their wine. Twice or thrice Elizabeth gave Philip an earnest look, which he could not misunderstand, as he filled and re-filled his glass.

"I wonder if she thinks I can not take care of myself?" thought he, with a man's willfulness, and he took yet another, to show that he was not at all obliged for her mute interference.

He was consequently in very gay spirits after dinner, and it seemed as if some wicked demon at his elbow prompted him to make himself as fascinating as he could to their single-minded, unsuspecting guest. If Bessie's heart had not been preoccupied by the owner of the initials graven in the snow that morning, she would probably have yielded it forthwith to the systematic besieger, who brought all his accomplishments—and they were manifold—to the capture of this little rustic hamlet. Bessie was as innocent of any coquetry, aside from those natural instincts of playfulness which are given to women to heighten their attractions, as a child; she thought Philip took a great deal of pains to please her, and that he was the most elegant gentleman she had ever met. That he was trying to add her to the long list of "broken-hearted ones" she never surmised.

There was one present who had a clearer vision. Elizabeth was distressed. She was afraid that Bessie would really become too deeply interested, and that Philip, after he had won her innocent affections, would despise them. She thought him too ambitious to think of marrying Bessie Bell. She had seen him playing this game of conceit and heartlessness over and over, in the brief time she had known him, and had seen several of the belles of their

circle as fascinated as a bird by a cat, and as ready to drop at his feet. But in their case she had no pity; she knew them as vain and capricious as their tormentor, and that their hollow hearts were filled more by his position, his money, his handsome looks, than by any appreciation of the excellent qualities which he purposely kept in the background. She had only wondered how he could so fritter away abilities which might be put to better purpose.

Now she was indignant for Bessie's sake, and unhappy for her own. Why unhappy for her own? That was more than she could answer. Perhaps she did not ask herself. We are all prone to put away self-questioning when the result is unpleasant. That she was becoming more and more interested in Philip—that person whom she daily saw and avowed was vain, tyrannical, and foppish, if nothing worse—was true; but she had persuaded herself it was the study of his peculiar character, which was always eluding and tantalizing her, which absorbed so much of her thoughts. Of one thing she had become convinced, that he was better than he appeared. His superciliousness was put on to vex his mother and sister as much as anything, and he allowed all his self-love to appear upon the surface, because his lady friends were guilty of the most apparent and grossest flattery. Elizabeth never flattered him; and she could see that he had a secret respect for her opinions, no matter how closely he tried to conceal the fact.

This evening she saw and heard his impressive attentions and delicate compliments to Bessie with a pain which was something more than sympathy with the girl. She had not thought him so heartless; she had not blamed him for flirtations with accomplished coquettes, who invited him to a trial of skill; now that she was forced to blame him, she did it unwillingly, and there was a heavy pain at her heart which ought to have warned her.

Her face was grave when she bade Philip good-night; he answered the silent rebuke in her eyes with a saucy arching of his brows. Bessie was radiant. She roomed with Elizabeth, and kept up such a commentary upon her handsome cousin's perfections, for an hour after their heads were laid upon their pillows, that her companion began to fear for her foolish little heart, but was relieved by the gipsy's saying with a sigh, as she turned her rosy cheek closer to the bed, before dropping off to sleep:

"But, heigho! I would not give my Jesse for a thousand men like him—no, indeed!"

The next morning, while those who were up were at breakfast, including Philip and his two cousins, Lizzie took the paper, as usual, to read the news of the day to her uncle. While read-

ing in the list of local items, her voice faltered and came to a pause.

"Oh dear! I shall never forgive myself," she exclaimed, looking quite pale.

All inquired the cause of her emotion. She read in reply:

"PAINFUL INCIDENT.—Three young children, sisters and brother, probably, were found in the doorway of the church of the Ascension, early this morning, frozen to death. A watchman, passing about two o'clock, discovered them huddled together in a corner, as if to shelter themselves from the wind, but it was too late to recover them. The night was the coldest of the year."

Elizabeth looked toward Bessie, when she had finished, whose lip was trembling, and who finally burst into tears and left the table.

"Girls, what does all this mean? Your sensibilities must be unusually acute," said Mr. Vanderlyn.

"It means, uncle, that we passed these poor little things yesterday, as they sat on the steps, and although we saw they were small and helpless, cold and hungry, we passed by on the other side, without risking so much as a dime out of our overflowing store, for fear we might harm society by our liberality! We came home and eat a luxurious dinner, laughed, jested, went to our warm beds, while all the time those— Oh, uncle, it impresses me as if their death would be laid to our charge!"

"Nonsense, Lizzie! You're a good girl, and you give enough we all know. It is unfortunate that you did not chance to bestow something upon the children, seeing it has turned out as it has; but, such things happen, and will happen, and nobody is to blame, unless it be their improvident parents."

Lizzie could not satisfy herself with such reasoning.

A servant brought Mr. Vanderlyn his fur-lined cloak and gloves, and another sat, wrapped to the lips in robes, upon the box of the carriage, waiting to drive his master to Wall street. Even the horses were more warmly covered than those children had been. She saw and reflected upon it; was thoughtful all day, renewing her good resolutions, and trying to solve the problem of the unequal distribution of blessings among the inhabitants of the earth; how some were born to the inheritance of poverty and ill-health, and evil inclinations, and some to riches which they could not spend upon their pampered senses; how beautiful souls were in ugly bodies; ugly souls in beautiful bodies; how boors could purchase pictures to line their palaces, and starving poets, thirsting likewise for refreshment to their spiritual nature, must be kept away from the shrines of art and loveliness to which the boor could bring his gold. And through all her musings ran an undertone—the wail of hungry and freezing

humanity—of hungry and freezing childhood.

CHAPTER V.

A VALENTINE AND A VISITOR.

"You shall be my Valentine."

With a passionate glow in her crimson heart,
The rose sat in her bower.—BAYARD TAYLOR.

"I WONDER if I shall have a Valentine this morning?" quoth Bessie, as she sprung out of bed, the morning before that fixed for her departure.

"Valentines are going out of fashion; I do not expect any," replied Blanche, from the dressing-room.

"I do not care for the fashion; I know I shall have *one*," continued Bessie, her fingers almost too tremulous to tie her shoe-strings at the thought.

She had never been away from "J. A." since they were betrothed, long enough to have a letter, until now; so it is no wonder that her heart beat somewhat fast with expectation.

True enough, they had not yet gathered around the table in the breakfast-parlor, when the postman called with a whole package of missives, and among them was one for Bessie Bell, which sent the roses flying to her cheeks at the mere sight of the envelope. As for reading it, she would not think of that before so many profane eyes. Everybody, even her uncle and aunt, rallied her, insisting upon their right to hear her Valentine; but she put it in her pocket and sat down to breakfast—without much appetite, however—and it was observed that she took the first opportunity for slipping out of the room. This ought to have distressed Philip, considering the attention he had paid her; but, as usual, he was willing to give up one flirtation and commence another. Blanche had several notes, a bouquet, and a jewel-box containing an exquisite bracelet.

Elizabeth had a missive, accompanied by a splendid bouquet; she threw the missive in the grate, and gave the flowers (costly and fragrant as they were) to Towser to play with; for the Valentine contained an offer of marriage from her rich admirer, Mr. Thompson. She told no one the contents of the burnt epistle, but Philip guessed what they were.

"You will never get such another 'catch'—I believe that's the term among innocent, unselfish young maidens; and you had better think twice before you discard eight hundred thousand dollars."

"Thank you, Philip, for your advice; but I hold myself worth more than that sum, when it comes to making a bargain;" and she broke the seal of a second note, a small sheet whereon were inscribed four lines of poetry, without any signature:

"Those feet, so undefiled, so pure,
Shall lead, and I will follow still;
Would'st thou my heart's high good secure?
Take it, and mold it to thy will."

She looked up quickly at Philip; his eyes were bent upon her with an expression which she had never before seen—earnest, questioning, passionately appealing. The look thrilled her, and, before she thought, before she reflected, upon the impulse of the moment, with a blush and smile of divine sweetness, she placed the note in her bosom.

"You promise?—you take the whole responsibility then?" he whispered with a flushing cheek, and turning away, he went out of the room, as if to conceal the too turbulent rising of his soul into his eyes. The next time they met it was not alone. She had stolen into the boudoir with a book in her hand, and sat in an easy-chair, apparently reading. But she could not see a word of the page before her. Her bosom was in a tumult, such as had before never troubled it. Doubt if Philip really meant what his look and whisper led her to infer; fear that he was trifling with her as she had seen him with others; doubt if she loved him; fear that she ought not, if she did; doubt of his goodness; fear of his follies; but, above all—yes, the crested wave that rose highest of all that surging sea of feeling, and caught the sunlight upon its crown, was hope—that he loved, that he would prove himself worthy. Then came another, rolling higher still; that was bliss—a bliss she could not help, nor restrain, nor reason with—it *would* have its sweeping way. While she sat there mute, inwardly filled with tumultuous joy, dashed a little with uncertainty, a servant brought her a card.

"Mr. Hastings!"

She hardly paused, after reading the name, to wonder how he came to be waiting for her in the parlor. Now she could see an old friend! Now she should hear from home! With a face radiant with pleasure she hastened into the room. Philip was there, and had been speaking with him. His quick glance was upon the stranger as Elizabeth made her appearance, and he detected the tremble of the lashes, very slight though it was, the rush of color to the face, the sudden throb of the breast. He cast a penetrating glance, too, upon *her* countenance, which was radiant with pleasure—pleasure and affectionate interest certainly—he could not decide if it were more.

"It is enough to shake the self-possession of any man to be welcomed by such a creature as that," muttered Philip, under his breath. She was, indeed, looking most beautiful. In her face was a light which made its pure and delicate lineaments unusually lovely. The rose which she had fastened on her breast was not more fine and transparent in its texture than her fresh complexion.

She introduced her friend to Philip. There was a slight reserve in her manner, which either of the men might have taken as a favorable augury of her interest in himself. Her cousin wondered whether the unexpected appearance of the minister, or the remembrance of his own words, caused it. In five minutes he had made up his mind that Mr. Hastings loved Elizabeth; he knew it as well as the minister himself—much better than the object of his passion.

"How have you chanced to be in the city so unexpectedly? You said nothing of coming, in your last letter."

"Ha! they correspond, then," remarked Philip, *sotto voce*.

The young pastor told the truth, but not the whole truth. He said that, taking a sudden cold upon his lungs, which unfitted him for preaching, he had obtained some one to supply his place for a Sabbath, and had come down to the city, thinking a change of air would cure his transient malady.

He did not add in the presence of a third person, that, unable any longer to endure the suspense which was gnawing at his heart, or to deny himself the happiness of seeing her face, and hearing her voice again, he had seized upon the first opportunity which offered itself, to come and listen to his fate from Miss Ward's own lips.

He found her apparently but little changed. Her dress and manners were somewhat more studied in accordance with the society in which she lived. She greeted him in the old manner, and sat by his side while she asked questions as fast as he could answer them, about her aunt, her old home, the village, the church, himself, his health, his labors, his studies. Philip excused himself, and for a couple of hours they had an undisturbed chat upon the past. It was a joyful time to Lizzie, whose affectionate remembrance clung to old associations. Twice or thrice the heart of the minister almost overflowed his lips, but he restrained himself, for he, too, had been cognizant of that subtle magnetism which warned him that in Philip Vanderlyn was a rival. He must wait and watch.

"Have you not discussed your old home sufficiently to permit us now to share in welcoming your friend?" said Blanche, coming into the room with her brightest smile.

She was in full dinner costume, superbly attired, and appeared fairly dazzling to the country pastor. Little Bessie followed her, and a little before the dinner hour came Mrs. Vanderlyn. The family all were affable, and gratified Lizzie exceedingly by the attention they bestowed upon Mr. Hastings. He could not be otherwise than grateful; and, it may be, that for a time, his better judgment was

held in abeyance; he admired all he saw, without questioning its intrinsic excellence.

They would not allow him to return to his hotel, sending for his carpet-bag, and assigning him a room in the house. At dinner he took a single glass of wine with his hostess. Wines and liquors were in profusion upon the board. Mr. Vanderlyn drank freely, as usual, and his son followed his example, though in a less degree. Even Blanche must sip a glass of sherry, to give a brighter witchery to her eyes.

"Speaking of Valentines, here is one which I received this morning," quoth Philip, as they still lingered at the table, and were teasing Bessie about hers. He read:

"Thy bark being set with silken sails,
And manned by pleasure's jolly crew,
Flew swift before the spicy gales,
From youth's Arcadian lands that blew.
But now, in manhood's deeper seas,
It buffets with life's rougher breeze—
Oh, may it still as safely ride
As when it skimmed youth's sparkling tide;
And when its silken sails are furled,
Be it in some still happier world."

"Lizzie wrote that. I caught her at it yesterday," cried Bessie.

"Well," replied Lizzie, with a laugh, "I have not committed myself very far, have I?"

"No, it's entirely too non-committal," growled Philip.

Mr. Hastings looked around to see if there was any meaning in the jesting.

"Philip is so vain, he would like to have the whole feminine world at his feet," said Blanche, laying her fingers upon the guest's arm, and drawing him away to a picture upon the wall. Elizabeth knew Blanche well enough to discover when she was trying to be particularly fascinating; and was surprised that she should give herself so much trouble to entertain Mr. Hastings. But she, like her brother, liked to flatter her insatiate self-love by continual conquests; and there was something new in trying her powers upon a quiet, reflective young minister.

Mr. Hastings was not handsome; scarcely good-looking, though his face impressed you as a fine one. His form was short, with broad shoulders, and his head massive. His brow was pure as a child's, yet expressive of solid intellect; his eyes were a very dark blue, lighted deeply from within, by a spiritual glow. He was a man most deserving of a love like Elizabeth's; and why she had not thought of it long ago is a mystery. A love like his, rightly appreciated and returned, must confer upon a woman the highest happiness permitted in this imperfect world. But it seems that life is full of perversities, and all its aims are at cross-purposes. If Mr. Hastings had spoken, as he would have done had not too much reverence and self-distrust prevented, before his

young parishioner went out into the world and became enamored of one of its brilliant children, no doubt he would have been successful, and we had not had so much reason to doubt the wisdom of Elizabeth's choice.

That evening he could only worship his star from afar. Visitors were in; music, whist-playing, gay repartee filled up the hours, until he sought his pillow to dream of what he should say upon the morrow. Blanche and Bessie were running up the stairs, and Lizzie about to follow them, when Philip caught her by the hand and drew her back into the deserted parlor. He held her hand so tight that it pained her.

"I want to know, this very night, Lizzie, if you love Mr. Hastings."

"Love him?" queried she—the thought had not come to her before.

"Yes! You must decide, for his sake and mine. One thing is certain—he loves you, fervently, with his whole soul. Now answer, do you return his love?"

"Why do you question me thus, Philip? What right have you to declare that he loves me when he has never breathed such a thing? He would hardly like it."

"I know it. But it is impossible to blind the eyes of a rival—and I *am* his rival, Lizzie. I tell you he loves you, and he will tell you so himself the first opportunity. Having said as much as I did to you this morning, I shall finish my declaration, that you may know your true position before he speaks. I love you, Lizzie, I never knew how deeply until to-day. What do you say, darling?"

She said nothing. Brow and cheeks were crimson; she was afraid to lift her eyes, lest he should see the happiness that was lighting them.

"You have won me fairly and completely by your goodness, your purity, your ignorance of fashionable faults and sins. It is my better half that loves you. I am filled with shame and regret for my frivolities; I desire to become more worthy of you; I wish I had had as sacred influences surrounding my childhood as blessed yours. I am sick of the life I lead. If you will, you can make a good man of me. Without you I shall be worse than ever. Speak, Lizzie!"

"I believe I love you, Philip."

"Dear Elizabeth!"

"But I know not if I do right in saying it. I love you against my best judgment. You have ways that do not please me, and I do not have perfect confidence in your sincerity, without which there is no happiness. Why did you try so hard to win Bessie's pure heart?"

"Bless you, Lizzie, she told me all about her engagement, with the prettiest simplicity, the

first evening. I *knew* she was safe—and—and—I was trying to see if I could provoke you into caring anything for me."

"Indeed!"—her face growing happier all the time.

"True! unmanly as it may have been. I could not help it."

"Well, that seemed to me the *worst* thing I ever saw in you, because so unprincipled. But you have habits I do not like, and you do yourself injustice all the time. I could not have liked you at all had I not discovered the generosity, humanity, learning, and common sense which you take so much pleasure in putting out of sight—dressing them up in the cap and bells."

"You shall cherish all my good qualities; root out all my bad ones."

Where is there a woman who is not made happy by thinking that *her* love has the power to win a man from evil? It has tempted many a young girl to incur dangerous risks. Elizabeth looked up at him with eyes eloquent of love.

"When you are *my* wife, I shall try to be all you wish."

He spoke the words very tenderly. She shook her drooping head, though her cheeks glowed roseate through her curls.

"I do not promise to marry you, Philip, until I see that you are changed in some respects. But I love you—love you!"—and sliding from his arms, which would have held her, she gave him one bright glance, and flew from the room.

And so the journey, upon which hung the most important errand of Mr. Hastings's life, was an unsuccessful one. He did not need to be told this by Elizabeth; he saw it all; the happy, triumphant face of Philip, the timid yet joyful manner of the young girl; the interchanged smiles, the stolen whispers. He was aware, too, of a restraint in her manner toward himself, and attributed it to the true cause. He shortened his visit, remaining only three days, during which time he studied the character of young Vanderlyn closely. He was incapable of wishing to do him injustice because he was a successful rival; on the contrary it pained him to discover any thing unworthy of his respect, or of the esteem of the woman he loved. The outward beauty, which is always more or less effective in winning approbation, had but little power over him—he looked straight through at the principle of the man—the motives which influenced his actions; he saw an undercurrent of bravery and generous sentiment, a courage of character, that acting upon the outside in the levity of foppishness, was capable, when called into action, of exercising resistance to evil, and daring the sneers of the world in a good cause. There was no

thing dishonest or penurious about the young physician; his heart was as hardy as an oak tree, which, outwardly, is fancifully bedecked with climbing roses and purple grapes. So Mr. Hastings took courage to hope that all would be well.

His own heart was as heavy, as if dead in his bosom. It was only with a mighty struggle that he gave up the hope which had filled his future with unspeakable splendor. It was a long time before Elizabeth could shake off the haunting memory of his parting glance, troubled to its inmost depths, love struggling against the will which kept it back.

"Farewell, Elizabeth. Remember that I pray always for your welfare—your best good. Be true to yourself, be good, be happy. No one deserves happiness more than you. God bless you."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSUMMATION.

"Breakfast setts, dinner setts, tea setts of gold—
Sweet little finned fixin's to hold
Mustard, eggs, salt, celery, sauce hot and cold—
Bohemian crystal, worth prices untold—
Porcelain modern and porcelain old—
A tea-kettle also of pure, solid gold,
For making tea in the kitchen;
Ruby setts, diamond setts, pearls in great strings,
Ear-bobs and necklaces, brooches and rings,
Jewels the brightest the orient brings,
Baskets and trinkets and exquisite things,
To entangle the souls of the rich in."

THE first of June was set for Elizabeth's wedding-day. Loving Philip as she did, she could not refuse to consent to an early marriage. She had meant to keep him waiting, as she at first threatened; but that very audacity of his, which had given a manly air even to his vanity, bore all opposition before it, and her will had given way in this as in many other matters.

The household was charmed with the prospect of a marriage and its attendant bustle and gayety. Mrs. Vanderlyn liked the match, which is saying a great deal for Elizabeth. Mothers who have sons, be they handsome or homely, gifted or stupid, are apt to think there is no living woman quite good enough for them. She liked Lizzie, her ways, her personal appearance, her good sense. Philip was such a fly-away himself, she thought a girl of as much dignity as Lizzie would keep him in bounds. If she was not very wealthy, she had enough for pocket-money; the Wards were an excellent family, related to her own.

Mr. Vanderlyn had no objections either; he hoped Philip's bills would be smaller, and his industry greater, when he got a nice wife, never known to do an extravagant thing.

Blanche was in her element. The preparations afforded just the kind of excitement she liked; and after the marriage was the promise

of a long season of change and gayety. Her mother, herself and Philip arranged all the details; the bride-elect was indifferent to them—except that she confessed to being annoyed at the prospect of so much display. Philip, on the contrary, was fond of fine effects, luxurious festivities and costly dress. He was resolved that the beauty of his chosen one should be heightened by every elegant surrounding. Elizabeth yielded to superior numbers. She did not care how they arranged things, only that they would give her some peace and quiet of her life—which Blanche declared was impossible.

All the thoughtfulness and depth of Elizabeth's character was aroused by the nearness of an event of such importance. She would fain have got away from the silk and ribbon, lace and frippery which pursued her everywhere, and found leisure for careful meditation upon the new duties opening before her. She wanted, too, hours of silence, in which to realize the strange joy which pervaded her heart, and to accustom herself to thoughts of the new position she was to occupy. Earnestly she asked of Heaven strength to bear her happiness meekly, wisdom to use her influence rightly; but it was only late at night, when the hurry of the day was over, and Blanche's busy tongue was silent in sleep, that she found the repose which she needed.

Elizabeth had quite a sum of money which had accumulated out of her income, before she came to New York, and which she could devote to her *trousseau* without intrenching upon the principal. She had a valuable set of pearls which had belonged to her mother; and she did not purpose purchasing any jewelry. Indeed, there was little need. Philip was lavish of his gifts. And every one of their wealthy relatives gave in proportion to the splendor of the occasion. If Elizabeth had been a poor bride, marrying only "a rising young man," the presents would have been none too costly; but now, there was a rivalry of ostentatious gifts.

Blanche was vexed because Lizzie would not consume half her property in preparing her dresses; and finding she could not persuade her into the purchase of an elaborate pattern of Honiton flounces and vail, she brought Philip's influence to bear.

"I would wish my Elizabeth to look lovelier upon that occasion than upon any other of her life; and not only lovely, but queenly. I would have nothing but the most exquisite fabrics to adorn her beauty. You know I am very fastidious, my darling."

That "*my Elizabeth*" melted her resolve, and the fifteen hundred dollars' worth of lace for the bridal-robe was ordered. And having begun by yielding, she found that the wish to please the man she loved, or the fear of offend-

ing his fastidious taste, influenced more and more frequently against the principle of action she had marked out for herself.

It was surprising what an amount of fatigue Blanche could endure in a cause like this which now interested her. Her private apartments were full of seamstresses, and the furniture was draped and loaded down with every tint and tissue of the innumerable delicate and expensive articles which go to make up a *trousseau*. As she was to be bridesmaid, she had about as much to do for herself as for Lizzie; who, poor child, was dragged out upon shopping expeditions, and kept standing to have new dresses fitted, until she was nearly ready to elope and be married by some country squire.

"If they would only have allowed me to go home to aunt Faithful, and be married there, in quiet, how much happier I should feel about it. It seems as if all the sacredness of the time was buried up in trifles. I long to be out of this atmosphere—it oppresses me. I pine for the repose of my aunt Faithful's cottage home."

So Elizabeth often whispered to herself, while all the time she was riveting the gilded chains tighter, winding them around every noble aspiration, and narrowing down her soul to the compass of a flounced silk or a lace berthe.

Mrs. Vanderlyn interested herself in choosing guests, arranging rooms and tables, the wedding breakfast, and general effects. She prided herself upon her entertainments.

The first of June arose, calm, sunny, promising. With the first red ray of the sun, Elizabeth glided from her couch, and throwing a white wrapper about her form, sat by the open casement, to gather courage during the quiet hour, for the important events of the day. The small garden lay beneath her window, sweet with early roses and glittering with dew. A wild longing possessed her heart to be out in the open fields, gathering a simple garland of wild-flowers to adorn her brow for the marriage sacrament.

In that peaceful hour, the birth of another morning, when God seemed visibly present in the east in the miracle of creation, overwhelmed by a sense of the relationship she was about to take upon herself, she blamed herself for the frivolous routine into which she had allowed herself to be drawn. She saw that instead of opposing her moral dignity and sense of duty to the light wishes of her friends, and especially of him whose welfare was, in a measure, in her keeping, she had yielded one stand-point after another. She had not been true either to her best self or the best self of her lover. She had promised herself to excite his conscientiousness, his nobler ambitions; and to hold in check the rushing wheels of dissipation,

that, loaded as the car might be with flowers, was wearing out the solid foundations of his character. All about her was vanity. She was lost and perplexed in a maze of frippery. Life seemed to have no purpose higher than dressing and being flattered. A wedding was a scene gotten up for the display of fancy goods.

She yearned for aunt Faithful's homely advice, for the fervent blessing of her minister, for the freedom of her old life. One breath of country air, blowing in at her casement, would have been sweeter at that moment than any incense of praise which could have been offered.

"Oh, my mother," she cried at last, with a sudden burst of tears, "where art thou? Bend down from the heaven that holds thee so far away from me, and press my head a moment to thy tender bosom. Thou wert so different from these—thy life was so much holier, so much more truly lovely. I feel unworthy to be thy child. Give me thy blessing, mother."

Her fair face, wet with tears, was upturned, and her hands stretched forth imploringly. When her prayer was ended, she bowed her head, like a weary child, upon the window-sill, and wept quietly, until her breast was relieved of its weight.

"What! in tears upon your bridal-morn?" exclaimed Blanche, entering the chamber, half an hour later. "See! here is the last gift of your affianced—the wedding bouquet. He just knocked at my door and left it for you. He went to the florist's himself to see it made up. Is it not magnificent?"

Quickly Elizabeth sprung to her feet, while the warm color rushed to her bosom and brow. It was her wedding-morn! Philip was up, and thinking of it, had been out and arranged those pure white symbols. Every drop of blood in her body thrilled at the sight of them. Silently she took them, kissed them, and put them in a vase of fresh water.

"You do not say if you like them, Lizzie."

"Does it need words?" answered she, with a glowing smile.

The hour arrived, and Philip saw only the shy, soft glance of his bride's eyes, and the fluttering of her heart, as she came to his side. At that moment he was indifferent to the effect of her Honiton veil, to the splendor of the bridesmaid, the imposing array of the bridal party, or the critical glances of his "dear five hundred friends."

His mother assured him, afterward, that she had never witnessed a ceremony more graceful and complete in all its appointments.

Blanche had eyes for the discontent with which her unmarried lady friends were forced to admire the profuse display of beautiful pres-

ents, and her own importance as bridesmaid. She loved to provoke the envy of her associates.

The breakfast was all that could be expected, even at Mrs. Vanderlyn's, who moved about as hostess, well pleased with herself, her son, her daughter-in-law.

It had been arranged that two couples of particular friends, including Blanche and the groomsmen, should accompany them upon the round of excursions which were expected to occupy most of the summer.

Three hours after the ceremony, the traveling party were on their way to the south. They were to spend a month in visiting some beautiful portions of Virginia, where they had friends; return to the sea-side, from thence, in August, to the White Mountains, and from there, go to Fitchville, making aunt Faithful a short visit—then back to town.

This programme of change and excitement was delightful to Blanche. She was constantly seeing new faces, making, or trying to make, new admirers, wearing new dresses. She lived in a sort of rarefied atmosphere of pleasure. Every one was anxious to do something to please her. The days were but rounds of enjoyment; the only study, how to be gayest.

Even Elizabeth forgot that life was any thing but a dream of love and idleness. Happy in Philip's society, blessed by his tender attentions, surrounded by summer warmth and delight, she felt like murmuring, with the Lotus-eaters:

"Propt in beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly,
With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long, bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave through the thick-twisted vine—
To hear the emerald-colored waters falling
Through many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine,
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotus-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills, like gods together, careless of mankind."

It was nearly the first of September before the bridal party reached Fitchville, and were welcomed by good aunt Faithful, in her best muslin cap with the fluted border, and the tears dimming her fine old eyes. She loved Elizabeth as a child, and wished her joy of her new life with a trembling earnestness which contrasted well with the elegant compliments which had been lavished upon her of late. Lizzie's own cheeks were wet with tears as she introduced Philip to her aunt.

Appreciating the character of the old lady, he put aside all unnecessary display, and with

true high-breeding, kissed her cheek reverently, and received her blessing solemnly as she gave it.

The gay young people of the party looked on with curiosity; the whole affair was different from any thing which had transpired within their city observation. They saw nothing however, but what they, careless as they were, could respect and admire.

Aunt Faithful was quaint, and her house and housekeeping were quaint, but right refreshing they all seemed, upon that sultry afternoon, during which her visitors arrived.

The cottage was low, but large, and so sheltered by trees, and so blown upon by a cool breeze from the mountains, that it was more desirable by far than the crowded chambers of a watering-place. She had met them upon the porch, and now conducted them into the parlor, whose muslin curtains were tied back with blue ribbons, and whose atmosphere was delicious with the breath of the honeysuckles at the windows. Bouquets of flowers, among which were the homely china-asters and everlasting of her garden, with pinks, phlox and verbenas, were arranged in the old-fashioned vases upon the mantle. A carpet of her own manufacture, almost as fine as "boughten," covered the floor, and the dark, solid mahogany furniture and low ceiling made the room refreshingly dim upon that glaring day.

Aunt Faithful was a widow, and her only son was away upon the sea. She lived alone, with the exception of a couple, a man and his wife, who attended to the overseeing of her work.

There never was a neater mistress of a household than aunt Faithful; she was what her Puritan fathers would have called a notable woman. Elizabeth could not remain long in the parlor. She just paused to throw off her traveling-mantle, and was out into the large dining-room the other side of the hall, back into the kitchen to shake hands with Margaret, out into the yard, hot as the sun was, darting hither and thither, wild as the humming birds that flew about the honeysuckles.

After a time Philip went in search of her.

"Oh, I think it is so delightful here, so much better than *any* other place I ever was in. It is haunted with sweet memories for me. Oh, Philip, I wish we were going to live here forever?"

Philip smiled at the enthusiasm of his young wife.

"This is just the place to have raised a pure wild flower, like the one I have gathered to wear in my bosom," he said.

What a pleasant tea was that which was partaken of that evening. A long portico ran around two sides of the dining-room. The doors and windows were all open; the cool,

green trees stood silently outside; and straight out of the golden heart of the sunset, a western breeze blew lightly, just quivering their leaves. There was no carpet upon the floor, which was white as the wood could be made, and waxed. The table was spread with ancient china, with patterns of bright-colored birds and flowers upon its white surface. The silver tea-things over which the hostess presided were still more antique—they had been brought over from England by her forefathers, two centuries previous. The fare might have pleased an Epicurean.

There was only one guest from the village, and as no New-England festivity is complete without the minister, of course it was he. Mr. Hastings came at the appointed hour. He greeted the bride with earnest kindness; his manner was quiet and composed. After he had interchanged greetings with all and was seated in conversation, Elizabeth saw that his face was a little thinner than when she met him last, and his brow even more thoughtful. There was nothing melancholy in his demeanor; his talk was delightful; he inspired respect while he checked nothing of the natural gayety of a party of young pleasure-seekers. Everybody liked him. Blanche contrived to get by his side at the table. She was ready to renew her flattering attentions.

So ready, that the next morning, when her escort was preparing to go on to the city, she begged permission of dear aunt Faithful to allow her to remain as long as Philip and Lizzie did. The new-married pair, to please the wife, had resolved to spend several weeks in her native village. Blanche was so charmed with everything there, so fresh, so pure, such a place for rambles and rides, she wanted to stay.

Blanche was truly delighted with this aspect of rural life, at this pleasant season of the year, and would probably have stayed had there been no Mr. Hastings in the village; but she certainly promised herself a more piquant enjoyment upon that account.

To-morrow—who shall tell what it will bring forth? Blanche, young, vivacious, beautiful—Blanche said in her heart that to-morrow should bring her fresh stores of pleasure and praise.

When they had been at Fitchville about a week, a riding party was made up. Blanche rode by Mr. Hastings's side; her eye was bright with health, her cheek blooming with exercise, the dark plumes waved above a face of glowing beauty; her laughter rung silvery clear; her form, erect, full, queenly, seemed exultant with its own loveliness.

Suddenly, as she bent to say some gentle word, careless of her hold upon the rein, looking into the minister's face with an arch glance, a paper which had been caught up from the roadside by the wind, came fluttering down

before her horse's eyes; he plunged fiercely to one side, and his rider was thrown heavily to the hard ground. The concussion was terrible, and the alarmed attendants reached her, to find what to them seemed but a dead body.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRUITS OF SUFFERING.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."

—SHAKESPEARE.

MR. and Mrs. Vanderlyn were telegraphed to, and received the fearful news in time to take the night train out. When they reached the bedside of their child, in the gray dawn of the next morning, she had not yet given token of consciousness, although she still breathed. They had brought their family physician with them. It was as if Death stood in waiting at the portals, while they waited for nearly an hour for struggling nature to sink or rise. The doctors were doing what they could. The mother was obliged to repress her shrieks, the father his bitter groans; all hung pale and shivering as with cold, upon the fluttering breath now drawn with a more distinct effort.

At length she opened her eyes and looked slowly from face to face; she made an effort to stir, when her breath was cut suddenly off with a spasm, her eyes closed, a deathly pallor came over her face, she was dying.

"Oh God, be merciful!" exclaimed aunt Faithful.

Mrs. Vanderlyn gave a wild scream and fell into the trembling arms of her husband. At this instant Philip shook off the clinging hand of his wife and sprung forward with his pen-knife in his hand; tearing away the covering from the swollen, empurpled wound, he struck the sharp point several times into it, the others looking on as if they thought him mad; but blood flowed freely from the deep cuts, and relieved the excruciating pain a little, that had snatched away the breath of the sufferer.

Powerful restoratives were used to arouse her from her sinking state; for a while life fluttered to and fro, and hope flared and waned in the breasts of her friends, like the flame of an expiring lamp. Presently the medical attendants allowed themselves to confirm this hope; she was better, and might rally. By night they announced that her symptoms were favorable; careful nursing might raise her, if she had the constitution to bear long pain and confinement; but, she would not leave her bed for weeks, if for months, and her health would probably be always impaired.

This was distressing tidings; but so much better than they had at one time expected, that her friends received it with heartfelt gratitude.

To the skill and untiring watchfulness of Philip, who remained by her bed, noting her symptoms and reporting them to the elder physician, and to the gentle, patient nursing of Elizabeth, Blanche owed her life. Hour after hour, day after day, the two remained with her, taking just rest enough to keep their strength from failing. At the end of ten days the parents returned home. With her inefficiency and restlessness, Mrs. Vanderlyn was only a hindrance; her daughter, who was now permitted to whisper a few sentences at a time, herself urged her to go, knowing how irksome confinement, dark rooms, hushed voices were to her mother. If Blanche should have a relapse she could be summoned in less than a day. So she very gladly concluded to return, though she wept freely upon parting with her unhappy child, and declared over and over again to all, that nothing which had ever happened to her so completely prostrated her as this terrible blow. She did not think she could ever be gay again a single instant, even if her daughter recovered.

After she arrived home, she took to her room, sitting in an elegant dressing-gown in her easy-chair, with her vinaigrette in her hand, receiving calls of condolence, and weeping over the messages which were sent once or twice a day, faithfully reporting the condition of the sufferer.

Selfishness had been supreme with her so long that she was helpless to aid or comfort others; all the consolation she had was in the sympathy which was expressed for her own great trouble in being so afflicted. For her husband, harassed by business as well as by this calamity, she had not a soothing word. When he came home of an evening, it was to find her exhausted by a day of tribulation, ready to give up, nervous, sick. Mr. Vanderlyn felt the blow as deeply as one of his temperament could; all the heart he had was set upon his beautiful daughter; as he looked around upon the magnificence which he had acquired, he felt that he could give it all up for the assurance that she would be restored to her former health and loveliness.

That was a terrible sick-bed to Blanche Vanderlyn.

When the first month of darkness was over, and her sufferings had taken on a dream-like aspect, their memory being too agonizing to remain palpable; when her pain was tolerably endurable; when the curtain could be put back a little, and people could speak aloud in her room, and she could give a smile and word of thanks for the flowers, dainties, and messages that were lavished upon her, then her spiritual affliction was the greatest. Her soul was bowed with fear and trouble. She expected to be an invalid all her days. She could not, would not

be reconciled to the thought! She, so young, so ambitious, unaccustomed to restraint or sickness! She, so admired, so beautiful, to arise and find the roundness wasted from her limbs, the luster of her eye dimmed by wearing pain; to give up dancing, dressing, festivity; to sit in her room, or perchance creep down to a corner of the sofa, a pallid ghost, haunting the places where she once ruled as queen: no! it could not be. Often she prayed for death, and then shrunk from her own supplications. She did not wish to die, and she *could not* take up the terrors of life; the burden was too heavy, laid upon her too suddenly. Often her brow was darkened with impatience, and bitterness breathed from her pale lips. She would either be lost in a mute melancholy, or so fretful and repining that her tender, untiring sister had her feelings sorely tried. Still, she forgave every thing to the poor invalid, devoting her time to her wishes, reading to her, talking, striving to divert her mind, and, at the same time, strengthen it for its new task.

At this time, when she became able to bear conversation and reading, Mr. Hastings became almost a daily visitor. He saw the unhappy frame of her temper; he pitied her, and approached her as kindly as a father would a wayward child. He saw that it *was* hard for her, with her education, tastes and habits, to give up to this calamity; it would have been exceedingly trying to him, or any one, however firm their trust in eventual good, however trained their minds to meet adversity; and how much more fearful to this glittering creature of fashion and vanity! He wisely foresaw that the only way she could be reconciled, or won away from her melancholy, was to interest her in new thoughts and pursuits. He began very gently. He did not sit down and dictate a stern creed to her. He read entertaining books, of a higher order than she had been accustomed to seek, revealing to her view glimpses of the pleasant vistas which the poets had opened for her feet to wander through, and of the wonders of science, relating, in an elegant yet amusing manner, some of the new discoveries so full of vivid interest—leading her on gradually to think of the Ruler of the Universe, so great in creating, and of the human soul, so quick in perception.

Far away, as in some fleeting dream of unsubstantial things, floated the frippery and idleness of Blanche's past life. She could hardly realize that things so worthless could have absorbed her so completely. Her present life, helpless as she was, seemed far more real and full of events. She promised herself that, if health was ever given to her, it should not be for her own pleasure alone. By degrees her impatient, irritable spirit was bowed in sweet

humility. The change was apparent in her countenance. Though thin and pale, it had acquired a spiritual look which made it very lovely. She no longer wearied and tried her friends by needless expectations. Only at certain times was she very restless, and that was when Mr. Hastings failed in his daily visit.

Blanche loved the minister. Yes; as she reclined upon her couch in the calm Indian summer days, looking through the open window upon the purple hills and gorgeous forests, surely as the mist stole up from the valleys and caught the red glory of the sun upon its snowy bosom, so surely her soul was transfigured and glorified in the light of this new passion. It could hardly have been otherwise that his spirit should have obtained such influence over hers, without awakening in return a deathless interest in her teacher and counselor.

To be well—well enough to work for him and with him, to bless him with beauty and love, and to be led by him safely, where otherwise her feet might falter, was now the one wild, unattainable wish of her heart.

She did not expect it. She was growing better in body as her mind was ministered to, and had the promise of being able to go home before the extreme cold weather. But she had scarcely a hope that Mr. Hastings loved or ever would love her; she knew that to him she was as a pupil or a child, whom he delighted to teach. But to her he was every thing which on earth she desired, teacher, friend, and more—oh, so much more. Now she knew the full meaning of love, and how, to those to whom it had been revealed, impossible and impure, marriages of ambition and convenience must seem. The nobility of the sentiment she entertained was proven by the fortitude with which she tried to resign herself to the thought that he could not return her affection, and by the courage with which she tore herself from circumstances which were binding her faster to her passion.

As soon as she could bear the journey, she expressed her desire to go home, and some time in December, taking two days to the brief trip, she and Philip and Elizabeth arrived at the home where they were so anxiously expected. Blanche burst into tears as she crossed the threshold, at thought of how happy and triumphant she had last passed over it—but that was almost the only token of weakness that she gave.

The delicate state of her health, which still confined her mostly to her room, precluded the round of festivities which would otherwise have honored the young married couple. No one regretted this but Mrs. Vanderlyn. Elizabeth was glad of a pretext for withdrawing from the round of excitement and dissipation

which it was the fashion to regard as pleasure. She, too, had profited by old association, by the reflections of that sick-room, and association with a mind like that of Mr. Hastings. She talked much and earnestly with Philip about the true method of seeking happiness, and the true ideal of a noble life. She found him willing to enter into her plans, one of which was to remove themselves from the temptations of a merely fashionable life, by taking a house of their own, and keeping it in a style suited to their ideas of propriety. For a while they hesitated on Blanche's account, who thought she should be very lonely without Elizabeth in the same house; but she was getting better all the time, and promised to be able to exchange visits.

It was spring before all arrangements were completed, and Elizabeth a housekeeper upon her own responsibility. A tasteful house, charmingly furnished, selected without reference to the grand suits of rooms necessary for unlimited entertainments, was presided over by the happiest young wife in Christendom.

When the warm weather came on, Lizzie hardly felt like shutting up her beloved new house to go anywhere; but Blanche needed a change of air, and desired to make a visit to aunt Faithful. Her mother, of course, must go to Newport; and so Lizzie and Philip accompanied her. The friends she had made in Fitchville were glad to find how much her health had improved. Mr. Hastings was really touched by the sweet serenity of a countenance once so haughty. She could walk quite a little distance, and her cheeks were rounded out into bloom again; the only serious consequence of her accident still lingering, was a haunting pain in her side, which increased with too much exertion, or by taking cold. It was thought that her excellent constitution would outwear even this in the course of time.

Whether Mr. Hastings, absorbed in serious projects as he was, could be much with so lovely a woman and not guess at the interest he had awakened, we do not know. But he knew that she was fast becoming worthy of the love and respect of any man. And he could hardly have been human and not have been touched by the gentle deference she expressed for his opinions and the faint blush which came to her cheek, the dewy luster to her eye, when he was present.

Aunt Faithful's visitors stayed but a few weeks this summer. Philip was now a practicing physician, with an office and regular practice, and must not neglect his duties. Lizzie, too, had duties; the sweetest and most sacred that cluster about the hearthstone. Here is an extract of a letter which she wrote to Mr. Hastings three months after her return:

"I have put off the boy's christening until you can

come down and perform the rite yourself. I wish, with your permission, to name him after you. I need not tell you how happy I am. A mother's responsibilities are heavy, but I would not shrink from the least of them, only pray for strength to fulfill them rightly. To your example and precept both Philip and myself owe much of our present resolves. We have retired a great deal from general society, but our friends know we are always glad to see them. Philip's indolence has entirely disappeared; he is one of the most energetic men I know, and the busiest. Come to strip off the husks from the golden grain of his nature, it is rich in charity and good deeds. As a physician he does truly Samaritan deeds. He will leave a rich patient at the call of a poor and friendless sufferer. He does an immense amount of visiting among those who reward him with nothing better than their gratitude. He can afford to do it, and I encourage him in it.

"You *must* come soon, and see how charmingly we live. My boy, too, cannot wait long for his name. He is a splendid little fellow, *my friends say*. Blanche makes the greatest pet of him. I believe she thinks he is as much hers as mine. She is now entirely well, at least we hope so, and much more beautiful than ever. Why do you not choose her

for a wife? She will make a magnificent wife for you!—but she would hardly forgive me if she knew that I had said so. I know of no couple so worthy of each other; and although not given to match-making, I believe I would do all in my power to bring about this one."

If Elizabeth could have seen the manner in which the minister dropped his head upon his hand in a sudden happy dream of future possibilities, she would have been satisfied with the result of his reading of her communication.

The christening was performed without needless delay, and it is expected that a wedding will shortly follow.

"A queer match for Blanche Vanderlyn," will be the probable remark of her fashionable acquaintance; but, she does not consider their opinion of such vital importance as she once did. She will marry a man for the love she bears him, and will love him for that which is most worthy of her affection.

THE END.